
New Options

Mark Satin, *Editor*

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Bigger Roads—or Trolleys, Bikes and Urban Redesign?

A little more than a year ago, my friend Tobi Sanders called up to chat. A NEW OPTIONS Advisor, she was full of advice that day—and so was I. We laughed and laughed.

A couple of hours later, another call. A dull-gray voice. While driving home, Tobi's car had been hit by a truck, killing her instantly.

Since that day I've tried to do something that I think we were all trained not to do. I've begun to notice—I mean, really *take notice of*—the toll the automobile has taken on my friends' lives. One friend's legs are brutally scarred; another was hospitalized for months and still suffers dizzy spells; another was awarded \$50,000 in damages, which doesn't help her constant spinal pain.

Last week I called the National Safety Council and got hold of the figures. Every year, approx. 48,000 Americans die in automobile accidents. Another 150,000 are "permanently impaired" (love this bureaucratese). Another 1,600,000 suffer "temporary disabling injuries." It's as if we fought the Vietnam war on our highways every 14 months.

There's another parallel with Vietnam: It's an undeclared war. Did any elected official ever ask you if you thought we should kill off half a million Americans every 10 years, rather than think seriously about alternatives to the automobile?

A non-issue?

Like most of the truly significant factors in our lives, the automobile is not an issue in this election campaign. The politicians and media simply assume that cars will continue to dominate our lives. *Time Magazine* recently ran a cover story on the congestion on America's highways ("Gridlock!," Sept. 12). Its principal recommendation: expand the highways!

You don't need the Worldwatch Institute to spot the flaw in that recommendation. But here's Worldwatch's Michael Renner anyway: "Building more roads simply attracts more cars. It's a vicious circle! In southern California,

where there are probably more miles of freeways than anywhere else in the world, the average travel speed is no higher than 33 mph—and is expected to drop to 15 mph by 2000."

Some other telling statistics:

- Car ownership is *not* levelling off. Americans operate 27% more motor vehicles today than they did ten years ago.

- "Today's average motorist will spend an estimated six months of his [or her] lifetime waiting for red lights to change" (Priority Management Pittsburgh, quoted in *Time*).

- Over 60,000 square miles of land in the U.S. have been paved over—10% of all arable land!

Consider, too, some of the less quantifiable costs of the auto system—how it's degraded the environment, how it's reinforced our obsession with efficiency and speed, how it subjects us to constant background noise. . . .

Neither liberals nor conservatives are addressing any of this. (Occasionally you'll find some "progressive" willing to stand up for stultifyingly expensive subway systems.) But if you know where to look, you can find other voices, proposing real solutions to our transportation problems.

Train power

The National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) is located just around the corner from the Amtrak station in Washington, D.C., and a couple of flights above an ice-cream store. Its cramped offices are stacked to bursting with books and papers—among them, the back issues of one of the most affecting newsletters in the social change movement, *NARP News*.

NARP's executive director and guiding spirit, Ross Capon, is white bearded and extremely articulate, and equally at home with railroad industry executives and federal administrators, Congresspeople and environmentalists and "just plain passengers." He has to be: he's constantly in touch with all of them.

When we visited, the *Time* story had just

come out, and he was steaming: "They completely ignore the success stories of rapid transit! They ignore the San Diego light rail line, which is expanding, which is covering almost 90% of its operating costs from the fare box and which is widely regarded as a tremendous success. As San Diego's mayor said, 'Everybody loves the trolleys. . . . People are giving up their second cars.' Portland, Ore., is similarly disregarded by *Time*. . . ."

How does Capon's vision differ from *Time's*? "The vision I'd offer is heavily influenced by the fact that people *like* to ride rail transit. And they tend *not* to like to ride buses. And they don't like to sit in traffic jams all day—although far too many people have been given no other choice. . . .

"There has to be a lot more attention paid in most U.S. cities to what's going on in California in terms of the new light rail systems. In a place like L.A., it may well be that subway construction is justified. But, in general, I think that most of the cities that do not currently have rail transit are going to find light rail a much more effective technology [than subways]—simply because it's so much more flexible. You can stick [the tracks] wherever you want to put them, in a road, in a private right-of-way, elevated, whatever. . . .

"There are an awful lot of places where travel demands are dense enough to justify rail transit but where there's no right-of-way other than your basic highway. We have to go and wrench that right-of-way out of the hands of the state highway administrators—or change their thinking—and put trolley tracks down. . . ."

Capon is just as enthusiastic about Amtrak. "Amtrak is already the Number One carrier in the New York-to-Washington market. Can it become that in other corridors? The answer is yes—it's a matter of making the investment."

Money power

We were mystified. If trolleys and Amtrak made so much sense, what was the problem?

Capon had a ready answer: "We've created these monstrous money-machines that spew out oodles of federal bucks for highways and airports."

"When you earmark all the gas taxes for highway building, and all the airplane ticket taxes for airport building, you've created a system that guarantees that the [transportation] systems you have today are going to get bigger—and the other [transportation] systems are going to get squeezed out."

"We could provide a good transportation system in one of two ways."

"We could pour the existing gasoline and airplane ticket taxes into a *consolidated fund*, and spend it on truly balanced transportation. Politically that's probably impossible."

"But what is possible—what might actually fly on Capitol Hill—would be a small increase in the gasoline tax which would include say a penny for Amtrak and three or four pennies for mass transit."

Pedal power

When we visited Marcia Lowe, in her tiny white research assistant's office at the Worldwatch Institute, her article "Pedaling Into the Future" had just come out in *World Watch Magazine*, and she was getting calls from *The New York Times* and invitations to talk shows. She couldn't have been more pleased—or surprised!

The article pulls no punches. "Bicycles are the transportation alternative," it begins, "that can relieve the congestion and pollution brought on by automobiles."

She didn't pull any punches with us, either. "There are some things you can accomplish with a car that you can't with a bicycle," she said. "But I believe the reverse is also true, especially in the bigger cities—where the over-reliance on cars has created a situation where the bicycle is actually more effective in downtown traffic!"

"And bikes don't require the same space for parking. . . ."

"[Consider] the sheer aggression that comes out in people when they're behind the wheel! They honk at each other, they rush each other, cut in front of each other. Whereas the same people, if they met each other on the sidewalk, would probably say 'Excuse me,' move out of the way, maybe even smile! It's just *different* when you have the power of the steering wheel, when you have a couple of tons of metal at your disposal."

"So I think bicycle commutes would be much more relaxing. [With bicycle paths], you wouldn't get to work all stressed out by rush-hour traffic. And there'd be green spaces. . . ."

We asked Lowe how we could possibly get from here to there. "The number of bicycle commuters in the U.S. has quadrupled in the

last decade," she replied. "This happened with virtually no public policy push, suggesting that official encouragement could inspire a more dramatic changeover. . . ."

"Commuters are not likely to choose bicycling when it means taking their lives into their hands on busy city streets. Effective bicycle promotion calls for bike paths separate from roads, and space on regular roadways dedicated to bicycles."

"Free parking provided by many employers in effect pays the gasoline costs of commuting. The Environmental Protection Agency has concluded that if employees were directly handed this subsidy, public transit ridership and bicycle use would go [way] up."

Bike-and-ride power

Michael Replogle is a "bureaucrat," a transportation planner for the Maryland National Parks and Planning Commission. He is also president of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (NEW OPTIONS #37), and author of a fine book, *Bicycles and Public Transportation* (1984).

In a wide-ranging conversation, he emphasized to us that the best way to promote bicycle commuting is by improving "bicycle-transit linkage."

"Promoting bicycles on board rail transit vehicles has been proven to be a safe, no-cost strategy for boosting ridership—particularly in non-peak hours. . . ."

"In one recent year, Santa Barbara carried over 40,000 passengers with bicycles on its bus trailer system. More than 30% of these passengers were attracted from their automobiles to make these trips! . . ."

"The integration of bicycles with transit is an important strategy for reducing air pollution and energy use. Recent research found that bicycle-parking installation at rail stations was *300 times more cost-effective in reducing pollution* than car park-and-ride development."

How would Replogle have us change our ways? "First, local governments and transit agencies should begin building guarded bicycle parking garages at major transit stops, instead of relying solely on bicycle racks and lockers. Parking garages [can eliminate bicycle thefts, which plague U.S. bike racks]. And they can make it easier than bike lockers for occasional or first-time users to [choose] bike-and-ride travel."

"Second, public agencies can allow bicycles on transit vehicles."

"Third, bike-and-ride travel must be aggressively marketed, just as park-and-ride travel has been marketed."

Rezoning power

In another tiny white office at the Worldwatch Institute sits Michael Renner, author of an am-

bitious Worldwatch booklet, "Rethinking the Role of the Automobile." Unlike Capon, Lowe and Replogle, Renner doesn't have a favorite transportation alternative.

"Looking at the alternatives people have come up with, all of them are sort of technofixes," Renner told us. "They don't really deal with the underlying problem. In my view, that problem is the land use policies that have been adopted and have made us *dependent on* using cars, whether we 'want' to rely on cars or not."

"We have to try to adopt land use policies, regulatory policies, zoning policies, that get away from the sprawling pattern we've seen throughout the postwar period. . . ."

"We need to move toward a more diverse suburban setting. Not go back to the traditional city structure, but move toward something that's sort of in between—where there's some sort of [suburban] 'core' where people can go shopping and take the children to school, go see a play, go to work, [whatever], all either on foot or by bicycle or, if need be, by public transportation."

"Today, whenever people want to do *anything* out of their homes, they have to get into their cars. And I think the only alternative is to change that *pattern*: To no longer fiddle around with the supply of transportation but to concentrate on the demand."

"I think there's a parallel here with the energy industry. One of the real transformations in thinking about energy has been to move away from [debating whether natural gas or coal or solar or whatever can give us 'more' energy], and saying, instead, Let's see where we could do with a lot less."

Shoe power

Three thousand miles away from Renner, in Berkeley Calif., is Richard Register, transportation activist and author of a visionary book, *Continued on page eight, column two . . .*

NewOptions

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Human potential bill reaches Congress

Last night I had the strangest dream. I dreamt that on the morning of Sept. 29 I was in a fancy Senate hearing room, listening to testimony on Senate Joint Resolution 368, the "National Commission on Human Resources Act" (aka the "human potential bill"). I dreamt that Senators Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) and Robert Stafford (R-Vt.), chairs of the subcommittee holding the hearing, lavished praise on the idea of a human potential commission, Stafford deciding on the spot to join Pell in sponsoring the measure. I dreamt that the witnesses all made impressive cases for the bill. I dreamt that one of the witnesses—a doctor, yet—led us all in a "prayer of relaxation" that bore a striking resemblance to Vipassana meditation.

I *thought* it was a dream until I gave the scene a good reality check. Pell and Stafford were the *only* Senators present. There were only 11 people in the audience. There was only one person at the press table.

So it wasn't a dream. But it wasn't an irrelevant side-show, either. Dozens of people had helped shape the bill. And the small turnout was just what the bill's managers wanted. "We're sort of quietly doing this," Scott Jones, the white-haired, mild-mannered and enormously competent special assistant to Senator Pell, told NEW OPTIONS.

Networks of friends

The bill's origins can be traced back to a letter that Dick Gunther, a Los Angeles businessman and philanthropist, sent to his friend Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) nearly two years ago. According to Gunther, Waxman was intrigued by the idea, and he and his staff wanted to know more. So Gunther brought together an "ad hoc committee" to think through the details. Among the participants: Norman Cousins, founder of the World Federalist Association (NEW OPTIONS #34); Willis Harman, author of *Global Mind Change* (#45); and T. George Harris, editor of *Psychology Today*. On August 11, Waxman introduced the bill on the House side.

Gunther wanted smooth sailing on the Senate side as well. So he and his friend Stephen Schwartz, an expert on psychic phenomena, kept in close touch with Schwartz's friend Scott Jones in Senator Pell's office. They sweated it out with Jones when, a year and a half ago, Pell approached the White House about sponsoring some kind of meeting or conference on human potential. "There frankly was not too much enthusiasm," Jones told NEW OPTIONS in his characteristically understated way.

Six months ago Schwartz and Gunther made their Senate move. They sent Pell a letter telling him they'd been talking about establishing a national commission on human potential, and that Waxman seemed to be in favor of it.

"We took this as a spur," Jones told NEW OPTIONS. "I sat down with The Boss [Pell] and talked about it, and he said, Well, let's draft something and see if we get a piece of legislation out of it that we're happy about. I drafted the legislation; it went through about 14 [drafts] before it came out looking as it did."

"We had one important meeting out at Esalen. Michael Murphy, [co-founder of Esalen], donated four days for us to meet out there. This was a sort of strategy meeting. We talked first of all about how to *get* the legislation, [and then] we talked about the working of the Commission." Among those attending: Murphy; Gunther; Schwartz; Harris; Norie Huddle, author of *Surviving* (#7); and Charles Tart, vice-president-elect of the Association for Humanistic Psychology (#48).

"Body, mind and spirit"

Pell's bill is simple and straightforward. It would have the President and Congress appoint a 23-member Commission to "advise the Congress, the President and the American public on policies and programs designed to facilitate the attainment of fuller human potential." The Commission would solicit views from the general public; establish a scientific advisory panel to assist in evaluating "technologies . . . to develop fuller human potential"; encourage the establishment of counterpart Commissions in other countries; and prepare an international meeting of all of them.

Within 18 months, it would prepare a report to Congress recommending "individual, family, community and government action to achieve fuller human potential in body, mind and spirit."

"There are two [outcomes I'd like to see]," Jones told NEW OPTIONS. "I hope that the Commission will identify those things which are already known [to] increase the health and welfare of the individual: Diet, exercise, meditation. . . ."

"The [second] area would be things that looked good but about which there's some controversy or a lack of quantitative data that established the fact they are 'real.' [Presumably these would include the kinds of psychic and "esoteric" phenomena that have been studied by people like Harman, Murphy, Schwartz and Tart—ed.]. So a research agenda of some sort may be recommended by the Commission."

We asked why the government should be funding this. "It's purely private funds [that will be supporting the Commission]," Jones replied. "I have started, in a modest way, to talk to people in the foundations. . . . We'd like to have some clear understanding that when the legislation is passed and signed into law, then the 'XYZ Foundation' will come through with some support."

Suppose the President and Congress appoint people to the Commission who don't understand its radical promise? "The normal political process *will* decide who gets to sit on the Commission. And I'm not resisting that. I know how sensitive Senator Pell is [to our purposes], and I think I know where Henry Waxman is. They will make their recommendations to the leadership of the Senate and House. And then we'll see what happens."

"And [now,] having said that, I truly believe this: That regardless of who these people are who [sit on the Commission], I fully expect that within several months a special dynamic will evolve. If some people end up saying, 'Oh my God! That old hack,' you know, that sort of thing, well, [those 'hacks'] may not be as hurtful as some people think. I expect the Commission to be very different, after it gets organized, than any of us can predict. I think it will mature and grow. . . ."

Dark suits, bright vision

Jones chose the witnesses to the hearing carefully, perhaps too carefully. All five of them were white males in dark suits with gray or graying hair. But among them they touched all the crucial interest-group bases and made all the right points:

- T. George Harris, editor of *American Health and Psychology Today*, pointed out that we've spent over \$190 billion on inner searching over the last 40 years.

- Willis Goldbeck, president of the Washington Business Group on Health, asserted that major employers do not view human potential as a peripheral issue. "The future economic success of this country depends on the 'human potential' of the American people. . . ."

- Herbert Benson, professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, noted that 75% of illnesses are "attributable to stress-related or mind/body-related causes."

- Robert Schwartz, convener of the "Tarrytown 100," a group of leading-edge entrepreneurs, argued that we need to develop our human potential because "the primary human need is for a value-system [adequate to] making the important decisions of our time."

- Markley Roberts, an economist with the AFL-CIO, sought to expand the panel's definition of "human potential" by pointing out that "employment, education and health care all must be addressed so Americans can achieve

their fullest human potential."

In the most poignant single exchange of the hearing, Pell asked Roberts how the AFL-CIO might respond to the Commission's work. Roberts replied that Samuel Gompers's famous dictum—that labor's single demand is for "more" — had been misunderstood. Working people don't just want more money. They also want "more opportunities to develop their human potential, and more leisure."

Nobody, but nobody, breathed a word about Calif. Assemblyman John Vasconcellos's "California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem," which has been ridiculed mercilessly by *Doomsbury*. ("When they heard about us, they called me," Jones told NEW OPTIONS. "John visited here one time [and] he and I had a good conversation. And at the end I said, Look, John, let's let the Commission make new mistakes. And he said, Absolutely. Everything [the Task Force] has done will be made available to the Commission so it can make new mistakes.")

Looking for support

The 100th Congress is almost over, "[so] of course the bill will 'die,'" Jones says. "The plan is to re-introduce it early in the 101st Congress and then see if we have the votes to get it passed. I think Henry Waxman has much the same strategy on the House side. . . ."

"We're certainly looking for support. . . . I hope groups will lobby for [certain] people to be appointed, and then assist the Commission in however they set up their hearings. Right now we envision that it will hold regional hearings around the country. Our hope is that those whose interests are directly involved will take some of the responsibility to make sure that good questions and good witnesses are there, and [will] push the Commission, making it more helpful."

"We'll see"

We wondered if Jones himself, a cautious Washington operative, understood the radical political potential of the bill. Eventually we asked him outright.

"If you look at any country," he replied, "what you find is a situation of education and [employment] that has reached a state of balance. For many years, I think our educational system was providing the working force that our economy wanted and needed. Now if you say that we're suddenly going to accelerate the capability of the individual, then we're going to have, in theory, much more qualified people, with perhaps a much broader vision of their personal value. And then things can get out of whack!"

"I would imagine that any political leadership would say, Hey, wait a minute! We don't ordinarily do things to ourselves like this, [things that might] not be in our control."

Jones looked at us with calm, confident eyes. "I can think of few countries that would knowingly do this. And I'm not sure the United States would. But we'll see; we'll see."

Jones: c/o Senator Claiborne Pell, 335 Russell Building, DC 20510. On the House side: Wendy Senor, c/o Rep. Henry Waxman, 2418 Rayburn Building, DC 20515.

World order's fourth stage

Stage One: For hundreds of years, from Emeric Cruce in the 1620s to H.G. Wells in the 1920s, bold thinkers tried to envision a federal world state.

Stage Two: From the 1930s to the 1970s, scholars like Clarence Streit and Grenville Clark tried to be more practical. Instead of proposing one-world government, they offered visions of a world "authority" that could prohibit violence.

Stage Three: In the 1970s, scholar-activists like Saul Mendlovitz of the World Order Models Project (WOMP) and Gerald and Patricia Mische of Global Education Associates (GEA) offered visions of a world authority that would not only prohibit violence, but promote such positive values as "economic well-being," "ecological balance," "social justice," "centrality of the human person" and "primacy of the individual conscience" (i.e., religious freedom).

Today we're on the verge of a fourth stage. The vision of a world authority that would prohibit violence and implement positive values is still central. What's new is that the *process*—the process of developing and sharing and implementing the vision—is, finally, becoming just as much a matter of thoughtful concern as is the content.

From time immemorial, world order advocates had offered their visions in a top-down, I-have-the-answer way. Recently, WOMP and GEA initiated new organizations whose purpose is to bring world order thinking "down from the mountaintop" and make it part of the apparatus of all grassroots social movements.

"Partners"

"Partners for World Order Alternatives" was launched by GEA this summer. "Our goal [had always been] to work as a catalyst for a multi-issue movement for world order alternatives," Gerald Mische told us from GEA's spacious offices near Columbia University in New York City. "Over the years we've published monographs, sponsored workshops, launched joint projects, [etc.]. But we were finding our way, experimenting. And it was [all] done by GEA staff or associates."

"Partners is building on that experience. This

next stage is an attempt to now not depend on GEA staff or associates [to do all this], but to look to [other] groups. . . ." In fact, Partners is trying to create a context within which other groups—from all over the world—can join together to work for world order.

For Mische, world order is the context, the glue that can bind all the other groups together. "There's too much simplistic analysis by the left," he told us. "The problem is not just capitalism, it's not just multinationals, it's not just militarism, it's not just patriarchy."

"These are all problems! But what caused [Patricia and me] to commit ourselves to world order is that we began to see there's this *structural commitment* of the nation-state system to macho power-elite values. . . . In an interdependent but lawless global marketplace, a nation simply *cannot* embrace a significantly more feminine, ecologically responsible, person-centered, human-scale paradigm. . . ."

"One reason why we haven't had long-standing coalitions is that people are brought together for a 'coalition,' but underneath each has their own primary agenda. And understandably so! Now we're trying to have each person put their agenda *on the table*—and have each understand that we're all caught in the national security straightjacket. Partners is an effort to work with those organizations and institutes that are ready to work [from this perspective. We'll] help them achieve their goals more readily, and in collaboration [with one another]."

Among Partners' projects:

• **National frame documents.** "We worked out a collaboration with the World Future Studies Federation to come up with 'frame' documents from as many nations as possible—[documents] that frame national realities in the context of interdependence and in the context of moving beyond traditional concepts of sovereignty. . . . [Our] goal is developing, in the next two years, about 70 national frame documents from 70 countries."

• **Issue frame documents.** "[We'll be] trying to come up with issue frame documents [as well]. For example, we're already working with [some] women's groups and church groups [on a document that] analyzes how much the roots of male supremacy and macho values are rooted historically in the [national security state]." Some other projected documents: "Ecology and World Order"; "Peace and World Order"; "Human Rights and World Order."

The documents will be written primarily by collaborating individuals and organizations, not by Partners staff, and they'll have two distinct uses. On the one hand they'll be contributions to the public policy debate. On the other hand they'll be "movement-building" exercises. The goal is to link social change groups around the world through the process of producing and

Continued on page six, column three . . .

Letters . . .

Liberty? You bet!

In your article on the seven alternative political platforms ("A Few Good Platforms," #49), you compare the Libertarians' platform with Carl Casebolt's "Peace and Environment" platform by asking, Is liberty really 99 times better than solidarity? *You bet it is!*

In a libertarian society you can set up a solidarity-based group, but in a "solidaristic" society if you don't want solidarity you're out of luck. Liberty is the framework in which other ideals can be tested.

And I just love that plank in Casebolt's platform that would forbid the release of genetically engineered organisms without the unanimous consent of "predictive ecologists." Why not be honest, and say you'd outlaw genetic engineering? You can hardly get a dozen people to unanimously consent to the sun rising in the morning, and I bet the day that plank became law Jeremy Rifkin would find a new calling as a predictive ecologist. Come to think of it, I'm not aware there is any such thing as a "predictive ecologist."

—Brett Paul Bellmore
Capac, Michigan

Thanks for another informative issue!

One plank of the Libertarian platform that should be of particular interest to all decentralists is the Right of Secession. The Libertarian party is the only party I know of which explicitly recognizes the right of individuals, groups, or political entities to secede from larger political units, including the nation-state.

Without this right, decentralism is just a pipe-dream.

Incidentally, acting LP national director Kirk McKee is incorrect if he said, ". . . any member is allowed to vote at [our] convention as long as they're present." Each State is assigned a set number of delegates, who are named by the State Party prior to the convention. Only those delegates are allowed to vote. To do otherwise would set the stage for all sorts of complications.

—Bruce Baechler
Chair, Libertarian Party of Texas
Austin, Texas

Newer synthesis

We're still at it, honing the New Synthesis Think Tank project to make it do-able. Since issue #49 I have the following to report:

• The second Soviet-American Citizens'

Summit [first was covered in #47—ed.], to be held in Moscow in fall 1989, is interested in our working with counterpart Soviets to design a joint Soviet-U.S. think tank effort. This would help develop agenda items for the Summit.

• There's increasing interest in the importance of grassroots local constituencies in our overall strategy. After all, if we develop policy directions that radically redefine how we should relate to the USSR, just *who* is an open-minded Congressperson going to talk to back home? There's a need for Local Constituency groups in different cities committed to the kind of thinking generated by the think tank. These local groups could also feed their ideas to the think tank, so a two-way dialogue takes place.

• Several funders have asked us for an expanded proposal. I assume it was OK to use your article as an appendix?

—Belden Paulson
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Green appeal

Good news about the imminent emergence of seven national progressive platforms. We in the Green movement appreciate the inclusion of our Strategy and Policy Approaches in Key Areas (SPAKA).

The editor's note at the end wondering out loud about a level playing field for all seven was right on the mark!

I hope the reader also noticed that most of the seven are pitching their visions and policy recommendations at the incoming administration; and that our SPAKA process, by contrast, is aiming at the general society; and within that, at alternative social forces, who if they could and would unite politically, would accomplish a regime shift and bring forth new policies and new leadership.

We're making a critical strategy choice. We assume, or say it's a judgment call, that the top structures of power, money and image-manipulation have become so disjointed from the general society that they can't and won't hear a reasoned and accurate statement of the problems, or understand a clear vision of alternatives to their own failed and lethal policies.

I would remind those at Institute for Policy Studies, the Democracy Project, and the 18 leading environmental organizations collaborating on "Blueprint for the Environment" that in order to get the top stratum to hear anything, you have to tailor your message—dilute your substance—often to the point of banality. And then you still wonder if they will really read or hear it.

I'd also like to make an appeal to the people at IPS, the Democracy Project and the leading environmental organizations.

Consider the fact that we at the grass roots could use your help. Would you be willing, as

individuals, to work with one of our local groups, helping them with a SPAKA in a field of your interest, and then go with their representatives to our national gathering in Eugene, Ore., next June?

It's a challenge . . . and an opportunity. And it would help to level the playing field.

—John Rensenbrink
Bowdoinham, Maine

Keep it simple

I have just read "A Few Good Platforms" in #49. Please allow me to humbly submit my version of a "comprehensive, visionary," decentralized and globally responsible platform that would result in a high quality sustainable society.

It's brief. Only nine words: "Be kind to yourself, each other and the environment."

—Joe Simonetta
Longboat Key, Florida

Two years ago Simonetta was the Democratic nominee for Congress in Pennsylvania's 15th Congressional district; see #29.

Keep it grounded

I am a person with a Harvard degree and a bare-essentials income of \$600/month—and a child to support! I have been short of money since quitting all semblances of a "normal job" to write on women's issues, work for battered women and edit a rock 'n' roll journal just getting off the ground.

I *adore* NEW OPTIONS and only it and *The Nation* remain on my subscription list. However, please remember that "the experts" are often NOT the ones with the really *valuable* vision. Look to the homeless themselves for a solution to homelessness; look to battered women to spell the correct steps to solution of male violence. I believe change comes from the bottom, not the top.

—Annette Weatherman
Springfield, Missouri

Somewhat disturbing

Your article on how best to deal with the budget deficit ("To Balance the Budget, Build a Sustainable Society," #48) was interesting, but also somewhat disturbing.

Perhaps all of those tax-related solutions you suggest are the most realistic given the nature of the problem. Nevertheless, I could not help thinking that all of those ideas taken together represent a tacit acceptance of centralized spending at those absurd proportions.

I would have been much more comfortable reading about creative solutions designed to

shrink the government's "black hole" domain over spending. Would this not be a more appropriate approach, consistent with the Green imperatives of decentralization, responsibility and empowerment?

Although higher taxes of the kind proposed appear more fairly redistributive, I fear such solutions alone miss the point entirely—reclaiming control over our own lives, without having to depend on the uncertain and often misguided intentions of a far-removed "other."

—Matthew Gilbert
Boulder, Colorado

TOES talk

I wanted to tell you that I thought your article on The Other Economic Summit ("TOES") in NEW OPTIONS #50 was great and no mean achievement—I'm not sure how you did it! I'm sending a copy to all our members.

I loved your comment about our 40-50 economists who've failed to share their fine insights with the general public. I've been saying for months that we should go public.

—Libby Lyon
The Other Economic Summit
New York, New York

Economics has been transformed from how we manage a household (from the Greek *oikonomia*) to how we can provide ourselves with what we think we need.

We have to be reminding ourselves constantly, especially at conferences like TOES, that "what we need" is a mind game we play with ourselves. Economics, like our lives, should be based on what we want to give.

—Terry Fowler
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

I was glad to see that you gave space to Japan's Seikatsu Club in your article on TOES. No consumer group in the world has gained so much political and economic power.

But you missed the most important fact about this new power: It is a largely feminist/housewife movement.

The base of the movement is 200,000 kimono-clad housewives who stay at home to tend the house and care for the family. They form local "Hans" of five to 10 women. They network through regional groups to the national organization. And launch what they call "girlcotts" to dictate what is grown and what is manufactured.

Their motto, "Woman Democracy: Peace, Life, Future, Nature, Earth," is put into practice in visits to tea and orange plantations, in recycling clubs, in environmental protests and—increasingly—in local politics.

With interest in "the family" growing in the U.S., we could find no better model to examine

in detail than the Seikatsu Club, for it demonstrates the economic, social and political power of the *housewife* and *mother*.

—Bill Ellis
TRANET Newsletter
Rangeley, Maine

Achilles heel?

I am impressed with NEW OPTIONS. You are doing what your title promises: describing possible new options for our society. Moreover, you're doing it in a way that's both understandable and lively.

I do have one comment. In reading some of your articles, I get the impression that the people cited as promoting proposals for social change have no realistic conception of how to get them adopted by a significant number of people, though that must be their goal if they're serious.

I know you share this concern—that is evident, for example, in the last part of your recent article on TOES (an article I found very useful in view of my inability to attend TOES)—so I won't elaborate the point. But I do think it is a question you should address explicitly and not just in passing.

I do not think you should change your basic mission of sharing new ideas and thereby facilitating contacts, networks, etc. You are obviously fulfilling a need. However, it would seem worthwhile to step back from time to time and ask whether the approaches being recommended in your pages are actually being put into effect to any significant extent or whether, in practice, many of the ideas are being discussed over and over among a relatively small group of devotees without real impact on anybody else.

—Thomas Stoel, Jr.
Washington, D.C.

Stoel Jr. is international program director for the Natural Resources Defense Council, and steering committee chair for *Blueprint for the Environment* (#49).

Barbershop display

My husband owns and operates a "Barbershop for Men" here in Macomb, and we stock a library and encourage people to read and discuss what they have read while they wait.

It has become a place where people meet to read and chat no matter whether they are having their hair cut or not. They borrow things from the library and xerox them, use them in their classes and share them with wives and friends.

We want to use NEW OPTIONS there. . . .

—Jerrilee Cain-Tyson
Macomb, Illinois

Continued from page four:

discussing the documents.

"Just/World/Peace"

Mendlovitz has chosen a slightly different path. Whereas the Misches are trying to bring together already-sympathetic grassroots activists, Mendlovitz has gathered together internationally prominent scholar-activists who *don't* necessarily agree with the world order approach.

These scholar-activists constitute a new group called the "Committee for a Just World Peace." Its goal is to come up with some kind of mutually agreeable perspective—a way of seeing the world that puts equal stress on "just," "world" and "peace." Its product so far has been two books: a collection of essays, *Toward a Just World Peace* (1987), and a first cut at a synthesis, Rob Walker's *One World, Many Worlds* (1988).

Among its 22 members: Elise Boulding (p. 8 below); Marc Nerfin, president of the International Foundation for Development Alternatives (NEW OPTIONS #10); Nobel peace laureates Adolfo Perez Esquivel and Desmond Tutu; and prominent scholar-activists from countries as diverse as Hungary, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Egypt, Britain, Chile. . . .

"What I see the Committee doing," Mendlovitz told NEW OPTIONS from WOMP's big, cluttered office across from the U.N., "is insinuating a struggle theory of history into traditional world order thinking.

"You introduce the struggle theory of history so that instead of seeing world order as coming about because ambassadors of the various executives of the world come together and come up with a constitution, [or] it's all done through the United Nations, you get people from all over the world who suddenly realize that, in order to not only [obtain] power but to maintain it and make it beneficial for the community, they've also got to become part of the transnational world. . . .

"Many people in the Committee do not have the traditional world order perspective. They have both an ethical and an emotional identification with the oppressed, and with ordinary people. But they don't have a coherent view of the global political system. . . . I think I've been able to put in their heads the notion that they've got to have some coherent view of the world. And that the nation-state system doesn't look like the kind of world that's going to permit them to maintain their value systems even in their own societies."

Mische: *Partners for World Order Alternatives*, 475 Riverside Drive, #456, New York NY 10115. Mendlovitz: *Committee for a Just World Peace*, 777 U.N. Plaza, 5th flr, NY 10017.

Murchland, Fresia: 200 years after

Last year was the 200th anniversary of the writing of the Constitution, and a torrent of books have recently appeared on What The Constitution Means Today. Two are relevant to activists: Bernard Murchland, ed., *Voices in America: Bicentennial Conversations* (Prakken Publns, Box 8623, Ann Arbor MI 48107, \$9 pbk), and Jerry Fresia, *Toward an American Revolution: Exposing the Constitution and Other Illusions* (South End Press, \$10 pbk).

Past as noble legacy

Murchland works for the Kettering Foundation, principal sponsor of a project that encourages ordinary Americans to discuss and debate the issues of the day (NEW OPTIONS #44). Not surprisingly, he thinks of America as "a conversing society" and goes so far as to claim that "America turns on ideas as the [E]arth turns on its axis" — a legacy he traces back to the Founders. What strikes him about the Founders' deliberations was their "groping character. . . . America, more than any other country, was born in debate. The Founders set the example of conversation as the premier civic virtue."

The political point of Murchland's book is that the spirit of principled dialogue and debate is alive and well. Certainly it is alive and well within the covers of his book. He interviews 16 people in all, not only semiofficial spokespeople like Warren Burger and unbelievable snoremongers like Henry Steele Commager, but social critics like Studs Terkel and Daniel Yankelovich and transformational thinkers like Benjamin Barber (#11), Wendell Berry and Norman Cousins.

The fatal flaw in Murchland's argument is that, even though certain *individuals* are thinking deeply and constructively about our problems, one can hardly claim that the American people as a whole is engaged in the vast continuous debate he celebrates. We're not even *exposed* to the debate—when was the last time you saw Barber critiquing parliamentary democracy, or Cousins critiquing the nation-state system, on national TV?

Murchland might reply that, to the extent we're not participating in these debates, we've simply failed to live up to "the premier civic virtue of the American tradition. . . . the Founders' legacy of rational discourse." By contrast, Jerry Fresia might reply that there's *never* been a genuine national debate, and that the Founders wanted it that way.

Past as sinkhole

To pass from Murchland, or from any of the

other bicentennial books, to Fresia's *Toward an American Revolution*, is like passing from a calm pond to the raging sea. Fresia's first chapter tells us that we're "afraid to reflect" on our heritage. The rest of the book explores three obstacles that keep us from reflecting and rebelling: respect for the Constitution as a fair and democratic document; an underlying belief that the U.S. government is fair and acts justly (or would, under ordinary circumstances); and a reluctance to engage in confrontation.

Fresia's book is, frankly, revolutionary; but it's no knee-jerk Marxist diatribe. The author prefers local empowerment to state control, has some good things to say about "spiritual" and "New Age" perspectives, and cites Starhawk and Beethoven, poets and therapists, more often than he cites dead theorists. That's no accident: above all, he wants us to pay attention to our *own* needs, our *own* wants, our *own* experience of the world. He doesn't tell us anything about himself, even on the dust jacket (presumably, that would be too "individualistic"), but one gathers from the text that he's a long-time political activist.

The book is culturally significant because it marks the rebirth of revolutionary rhetoric on the part of the Vietnam generation. (Its publisher's new magazine, *Zed*, is also flirting with what it calls "the R-word.") It makes sense that, as we slide into our 40s with a legacy of defeat and only Bush and Dukakis on the horizon, a large number of former 60s radicals would want to return to their revolutionary starting-off place.

Fresia makes a powerful case. Relying on the extensive writings of our generation's "revisionist" historians and muckrakers, and writing in a clear, supple prose, he demonstrates that most of the Founders feared and mistrusted ordinary Americans—and that the Constitution perfectly reflects that bias. In part because of the Constitution, Fresia argues, we-the-people have been victimized by repression and "secret government" throughout American history. In part because of our near-worship of the Constitution, we stop short of confronting "the system" in our politics and even in our protest actions. Fresia's indictment of the strategies of "Congressional technocrats" and "abstract spiritualists" (people like Scott Jones, p. 3 above, and Gerald Mische, p. 4 above, respectively) makes for stimulating reading.

Past as prologue

The trouble with Fresia's book is that it's too extreme. Yes, the Founders had selfish

economic interests—but the Constitution is less one-sided and more malleable than he makes it out to be. Yes, our political strategies are less revolutionary than are our dreams. But the reason for that is not timidity. The reason is that, over the last 20 years, we've learned that the way we create change determines the change we get. If we want a nonviolent, life-loving society, then activists have to model those qualities from the beginning.

The social change movement has enough problems in this country. To saddle ourselves with Fresia's views would be too much to bear. We've got to stop thinking of the past either reverentially or contemptuously, but simply as "what happened" — as prologue to the present—as something to learn from *and move on* from. Two recent books, by Thomas Power and Elise Boulding, do just that, and are reviewed below.

Power: the next economics

For 200 years we've been taught that economics has mostly to do with business and finance. The implication is that economics has mostly to do with quantity not quality, and that communities can do little to foster prosperity except pursue quantitative growth (by lowering tax rates, luring out-of-town industries, etc.).

Over the years, NEW OPTIONS has reported on many groups that challenge those teachings *in practice*—Institute for Local Self-Reliance, Regeneration Project, South Shore Bank, etc. But their own economic teachings—their alternative economic theories—were never made clear. Now, at last, there's a book by a professional economist that articulates, in a clear and systematic way, the economics behind the strategy of self-reliant community economic development and alternatives to growth: Thomas Power's *The Economic Pursuit of Quality* (M.E. Sharpe, \$15 pbk).

Power is not a member of The Other Economic Summit (#50) or, to the best of our knowledge, any other decentralist/globally responsible network. He's chairman of the economics department at the University of Montana, and he also teaches in something called the "Wilderness and Civilization Program" there. His bibliography is filled with the works of technical, even quantitative, economists; nothing by Paul Hawken, Hazel Henderson, Amory Lovins or David Morris even makes the list.

But what a definitive job he does! The first chapters demonstrate that economics deals, or should deal, with *all* scarce resources, and that most such resources are either non-material or are supplied outside the market economy. Even

most of our food, clothing, shelter and medical care is not bought out of necessity, but for other, more subjective reasons. Economics is therefore largely about the pursuit of quality, not quantity.

The problem with the "economic growth" strategy, Power suggests, is that it focuses on increasing a community's *quantities*—of jobs, of exports, of people—as distinct from increasing its *qualities*, or positive attributes. Local enterprises are not nurtured and supported. Local capital is underused, or misused. The educational system is not strengthened. The natural environment is not protected. Cultural life is not nourished. In this context, economic "growth" can only make things worse. However, a strategy of "economic vitality"—basically, doing everything *not* done above—would create genuine "well-being" and make any growth strategy unnecessary.

This skimpy summary doesn't begin to do justice to the elegant technical arguments you can find in Power's book. Suffice it to say that we can now make our case in the same arena that Milton Friedman (conservative), Lester Thurow (liberal) and Sam Bowles (neo-Marxist) make theirs.

Boulding: the next civics

For 200 years we've been taught that "civics" means the rights and duties of American citizenship. But suppose we were taught a higher civics, a civics for *world* citizenship? What would it cover? And what would it have us do? Those are the questions Elise Boulding asks in her new book, *Building a Global Civic Culture* (Columbia Univ. Teachers College Press, \$19).

Boulding is—among many other things!—a Quaker, a former international chair of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a former U.N. consultant, a former professor of sociology (Colorado, Dartmouth), and an activist in the World Future Studies Federation. In this wise book she sums up her life's learnings.

In the first half she "maps the world" (in her felicitous phrase). We are given a brief tour of the nation-state system, the "intergovernmental" system (basically, the U.N.) and the "non-governmental" system (the 18,000 transnational voluntary organizations). This is all done quite matter-of-factly. Then, all of a sudden, we are taken to a different level of analysis. We are told that the sum total of all the thoughts generated in the intergovernmental and non-governmental systems "can be imaged (sic) as another sphere enveloping the planet. . . . In that envelope of thought lie the seeds of the new planetary culture. The more we involve

ourselves in the networks that give us access to that envelope, the more we can contribute to the emergence of that culture."

The second half of the book tells us *how* to contribute. On the one hand, we're told, we need to develop our imaginations, our ability to "image" better futures. On the other hand, we need to get involved in actually existing transnational networks.

These chapters, too, are admirably practical: an imaging *workshop* is described; many specific organizations are detailed. But here again there's a spiritual twist at the end. Key to all the above, we're told, is "becoming a person": becoming reflective, learning to be kind, understanding "how difficult a thing it is to grow up human in any society, and how necessary it is for us to help one another deal with our differences."

Continued from page two:

Ecocity Berkeley (1987). Register doesn't work for the Worldwatch Institute or any comparable organization; his understanding comes at least as much from the street as from learned journals. So it was striking to discover the similarities between Renner's and Register's perspectives. . . and fun to note the differences.

Register is certainly blunter. "What I think about is not just the automobile but its relationship to sprawl, which I call 'Auto Sprawl Syndrome'—the acronym is ASS, 'cause we're always sitting on our ass in the automobile and at the office and in front of the television. The whole society *sits*. It's a vicarious society, and I don't know how people can feel alive. . . ."

"Transportation is supposed to deliver access to whatever you want to have in your life: your job, your living place, your friends, a movie or whatever. But the fact of the matter is we've let transportation give us access, when we could have been getting access by designing our cities

differently. Then we'd have what I call 'Access by Proximity' instead of 'Access by Transportation.' 'Access by Proximity' means you're closer to things. . . ."

Register is less tolerant of suburbia, even a modified suburbia, than Renner. "Ecological development *requires* proximity. If you put a solar collector on suburbia, it's just bulls—. Because you're going to spend 12 times the energy you can gather in your solar collector, driving around! People would do less damage if they simply moved to town and did without solar.

"Now, if you start having mixed-use zoning, if you have people living close to where they work, if you have the little compact European-style towns and cities, instead of these sprawled, scattered ones, *then* you'd have a context in which you could start talking about really good transportation policies, and energy policies, and all the rest of it. And you'd get exactly the opposite kind of hierarchy from the one that's common in America today.

"At the top of the existing hierarchy is the automobile; second on down is buses; then trains; then bikes; and finally shoes. A healthy city would be one in which most people would walk most places; then they would bicycle (note that at this point there'd be no pollution, no fossil-fuel use at all); the next one down would be trains and streetcars; then buses (still public); and then, finally, the worst of all would be cars."

Capon: NARP, 236 Massachusetts Ave. N.E., #603, DC 20002. Lowe and Renner: Worldwatch Inst., 1776 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., #701, DC 20036; "Pedaling," \$4; "Re-thinking," \$4. Replogle: ITDP, Box 56538-Brightwood Stn, DC 20011; Bicycles and Public Transportation, \$17.50. Register: Urban Ecology, 1939 Cedar St., Berkeley CA 94709; Ecocity Berkeley, \$12 from North Atlantic Books, 2800 Woolsey St., Berkeley 94705.

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