2. Where Did the Green Movement Come From?

Ask a gathering of European Greens where their movement came from and many of them are sure to point westward across the Atlantic Ocean. For even though the synthesis of political forces that created the Green movement occurred first in Europe, many of the individual political currents brought together by the Greens had their origins here in the United States. To properly understand the origins of both the European and North American Green movements, it is necessary to trace the recent history of peace and environmental activism in the United States and explore our own traditions of local democracy and nonviolent protest.

The real origin of the Green movement is in the great social and political upheavals that swept the United States and the entire Western world during the 1960's. The civil rights, peace and student movements were the first visible signs of the emergence of a new consciousness, soon to be followed by the re-emergence of feminism and of a new environmental awareness. At the same time, a profound cultural reawakening was taking place. By 1966 or 1967, a genuine counter-culture had emerged, which was to shake the foundations of the values Americans had come to take for granted.

The 1960's were a time of widespread cultural, social and artistic experimentation. Materialism, obedience to authority and traditional work and sexual roles were all opened to question. Young people sought liberation from the rigid ways of their parents and of the oppressive institutions of work and school. The cry was to be able to “do your own thing” the result was a blossoming of new experiments in communal living, liberated personal relationships and spiritual growth. Some experiments floundered and others ended up reproducing the oppressive ways of the larger society merely in a different style. But they were the beginning of an awakening to the idea that the established routines of twentieth century life were not the only way, that it was possible to create new ways of living that could allow people to more fully realize themselves.

The seeds of a new culture were sown during the dark days of the 1950's, when most of America was still aslumber in the air of quietude and conformity that marked the post-World War II years. The scant resistance to the status quo that survived the war was either bought off by the postwar economic boom or rooted out in the Red Scare of the early 1950's. The fifties, far more than the eighties, were a difficult time for anyone who sought to question the existing order.

But something didn't quite fit. Poets from the streets of New York and San Francisco spoke, often deliriously, of the imminent collapse of the staid, button-down ways of white middle-class America. The new rhythms of rock and roll spoke an overt sensuality that respectable parents condemned as dangerous, even subversive. These were the harbingers of things to come.

In the winter of 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, a black woman named Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of a racially segregated city bus. This simple act of defiance sparked the Montgomery bus boycott which to many marked the beginning of the black Civil Rights movement. A yet-unknown young minister, Martin Luther King, Jr., was enlisted as a spokesperson for the boycott and instantly became a national figure. Marches, sit-ins and large demonstrations spread throughout the South, as blacks increasingly refused to cooperate with the laws that deprived them of their basic rights as human beings.

By the early 1960's, college students and disarmament activists from the North were making regular trips southward to assist black communities in their efforts. They were profoundly changed by the experience. The students, both black and white, returned to their campuses with a personal knowledge of the inequalities and injustices upon which our social system thrives, and with eye-opening experiences of defying that system. They proceeded to turn their knowledge loose on the universities themselves,
rebell[ing against archaic social rules, rigidly controlled courses of study and the suppression of controversial points of view.

Two important currents emerged during the early civil rights and student movements that previously lay buried in conventional accounts of American history. These were the complementary themes of community organization and nonviolent action. Political organization at the community level has been a key undercurrent in this country's history since colonial times; the American Revolution was itself largely born of loosely-knit alliances of local political circles and informal militias. Community-based organizing around economic issues has been important for much of this century. It became particularly widespread in Chicago and other inner cities during the 1940's and 1950's, with a wealth of creative nonviolent tactics proving successful against the major urban political machines of the time. During the sixties, many student activists spent their summers in fledgling community organizing efforts in poor neighborhoods of their own cities.

The methods of nonviolent resistance that arose during the Civil Rights movement can also be traced back to the beginnings of American history—many of forms of nonviolent noncooperation with the British authorities marked early efforts toward independence. The labor movement and the earliest campaigns for women's rights—the suffragists and their contemporaries—all utilized sit-down strikes, boycotts, human blockades and the like to help advance their aims. Every war this country has ever fought was vigorously opposed in many diverse sectors of society, with people aroused to draft resistance, tax refusal and all means of political action in the name of peace.

The Civil Rights movement, however, was probably the first to raise the theme of nonviolence on a national scale. Images of nonviolent black demonstrators being attacked by white Southern police shook people's confidence in a system of justice so blatantly poised to defend inequality. Participation in these campaigns exposed the brutal underside of American "law and order" for Southern blacks and their supporters alike. By the middle sixties, inner cities across the country were erupting in riotous displays of frustration and rage. Nonviolence had stirred the nation's conscience, paved the way for important social reforms and offered an example for other movements to follow; Black Power, however, threatened the very social stability so valued by middle class America.

The war in Vietnam placed even larger numbers of people of all racial and social backgrounds in direct opposition to the established order. As the government escalated the war, increasing the numbers of military "advisers," bombing North Vietnam, and eventually committing American combat troops by the tens and hundreds of thousands, people's frustration grew. Protest evolved toward open resistance, as draft age men publicly burned their draft cards and many hundreds of people trespassed at the Pentagon and at local military recruiting centers. Hundreds of thousands of people participated in large demonstrations in Washington, D.C. and worked for peace in their own communities. Discontent spread through the ranks of the military, spawning open acts of rebellion against officers and their loathsome orders.

By the early 1970's, the antiwar movement could take credit for substantially slowing the Pentagon's efforts to further escalate the war, discouraging President Johnson from running for re-election and moving all sides, however reluctantly, to the peace table. Opposition to the war forced an early pullout of U.S. troops and may have prevented the use of nuclear weapons against the Vietnamese. The Vietnam War, more than anything else, shaped the experiences and values of those who came of age in the 1960's.

The sixties were a time of change in Europe, too. In May of 1968, French students and workers went on strike together against college rules, workplace regimentation and the stultifying patterns of everyday life. They effectively stopped business as usual in the streets and factories of Paris for the better part of two months. In West Germany, England and other countries, people demonstrated against their own countries' involvements in Vietnam and for social alternatives. To the East, in Czechoslovakia, the movement for greater democracy became so large and vocal that the Russians chose to suppress it with soldiers and tanks. Around the world, people increasingly came to see that sweeping revolutionary changes were necessary to transform a system that thrived on war, poverty and oppression.

The revolution was not to be just political, either. Finding new ways of living, thinking, loving and creating were essential parts of the overall transformation that people were seeking. Though the
various political movements and the counter-culture were often in conflict over ideology and personal priorities, they were complementary sides of an overall questioning of values and institutions and a search for new alternatives. In his book, *More Power Than We Know*, nonviolent activist Dave Dellinger described some of the links between political activism and personal transformation that appeared during the sixties:

In the civil rights and antiwar movements at their best, participants began to rediscover the lost practice of democracy. They began to learn self-reliance, communal solidarity, participatory decision-making, nonelectoral politics, direct action and local, country- and worldwide cooperation. They began to experiment with communal interactions and multidimensional coalition programs that gave satisfaction to the minorities in their ranks as well as the majority. They began not only to savor a reprieve from society's inhibition on love and trust but to explore more dynamic methods of asserting their collective will than pulling a lever on a voting machine every two to four years....

The counter-culture created a sustaining legacy of personal liberation that was able to carry the movement through the continual ebbs and flows of public protest.

Life in “the movement” was not all rosy, however. By 1970, the antiwar movement was badly split over principles and political ideologies. Bitter factional disputes had developed in many areas: differing styles of organization and methods of political analysis; conflicting ways of relating the war to broader social issues; adherence to nonviolence vs. more aggressive forms of confrontation; and revolutionary vs. reformist strategies for long-term change. The more open, democratic ways of earlier years, based on the principle of participatory democracy, gave way in many groups to increasingly authoritarian, even militaristic styles of organization. It was often the women in the movement who reacted most vocally against these changes.

For years, women had done much of the day-to-day work that kept large movement organizations afloat. With the adoption of more top-down structures and more feverish rhetoric, it became increasingly clear that the antiwar movement was reproducing the role divisions of the larger society—the women did much of the hardest work and the men made all the decisions.

Since the early 1960's, a substantial re-evaluation of women's roles in society had begun to take place. Women were beginning to understand how their restrictive home life, their subordinate economic status and even the most intimate details of their personal relationships were shaped by a male-dominated social system poised to keep women in a subservient role. For women involved in social change work, it was no longer possible to ignore the glaring analogy between the systematic oppression of people of color around the world and the equally systematic oppression of women of all races. It was clear that some major changes were necessary.

Out of this awareness, the Women's Liberation Movement was born. Within its Consciousness-Raising groups, women began to see how their most deeply personal experiences of oppression were so often shared with other women. Abolishing war and economic injustice would not be enough to eliminate the oppression women felt in their daily lives, because the personal is also political. To achieve true liberation, many newly-realized feminists argued, it would be necessary to get rid of patriarchy, the social domination by men and, by extension, of all hierarchical relations between people. The prominent radical feminist Mary Daly explains:

> Within patriarchy, power is generally understood as power over people, the environment, things. In the rising consciousness of women, power is experienced as power of presence to ourselves and to each other, as we affirm our own being against and beyond the alienated identity bestowed upon us within the patriarchy.

—from *Woman of Power*, Number 1

With these insights also came, for many feminists a closer identification with nature. For Eco-feminists (a term coined in the later 1970's), the domination of women and the fabled domination of nature by Western Man were born of the same basic denial of the biological nature of human existence, which women had come to personify in the dominant male culture. Eco-feminists set out to reinterpret women's ties to natural cycles as something to cele-
brate, as the basis for a more thoroughgoing reconciliation of nature and culture and a more profound liberation from socially-imposed roles. For some, this meant foundling separate all-women's communities; for others it was a first step toward a healed, nurturing relationship between all of humanity and the rest of nature:

We know ourselves to be made from this earth. We know this earth is made from our bodies. For we see ourselves. And we are nature. We are nature seeing nature. We are nature with a concept of nature. Nature weeping. Nature speaking of nature to nature.

—Susan Griffin, Woman and Nature

Over the same span of years, a new environmental movement came to the fore in the United States. Early environmentalism developed on a somewhat separate track than the other movements of the sixties. It often had origins in mainstream efforts to conserve natural resources for longer-term use and in the efforts of wealthy elites to keep their part of the wilderness free from development and from the intrusions of other people.

By the mid-1960's, however, environmentalism had taken on a new feeling of urgency. Lakes and rivers near large industrial cities were literally dying from uncontrolled dumping of sewage and industrial wastes. They smelled putrid and were unsafe to swim or fish in. City water supplies were threatened. Air pollution had also become a serious health hazard, affecting millions of people in every major city. It was clear that something had to be done.

Environmentalism could not hold on to its exclusiveness and its undertone of elitism for very long. People looked back to the nature writings of the 19th century and discovered that, for people like Thoreau and John Muir, the protection of nature was intimately intertwined with social activism and a critique of industrial society. The science of ecology was also re-examined. In its view of the vital interconnectedness of species in a biotic community, people found a new plea for rethinking the relationships among people in a social community.

Where Did “Green” Come From?

[The] integrative, reconstructive aspect of ecology, carried through to all its implications, leads directly into anarchic areas of social thought. For, in the final analysis, it is impossible to achieve a harmonization of man [sic] and nature without creating a human community that lives in a lasting balance with its natural environment.

—Murray Bookchin, “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought,” 1965

Most of the environmental laws we take for granted today were passed in the early 1970’s. They were the product of overwhelming public pressure on a conservative administration in Washington, D.C., which was simultaneously carrying on an eccodial, as well as genocidal, war against Vietnam. For some environmentalists, the new laws were almost enough; it was sufficient now to keep close watch on the new environmental agencies and carry on the necessary lawsuits against the most notorious polluters.

But for many, especially people with ties to other social movements, this was not enough. Giving the government more power to regulate was perhaps even part of the problem since regulations were often tailored to the needs of the most powerful corporate interests. Even before the first Earth Day in May of 1970, a few groups were proclaiming ecology as the key to a vision of an entirely new way of life:

Our cities must be decentralized into communities, or ecocommunities, exquisitely and artfully tailored to the carrying capacity of the ecosystems in which they are located. Our technologies must be readapted and advanced into ecotechnologies, exquisitely and artfully adapted to make use of local energy sources and materials, with minimal or no pollution of the environment. We must recover a new sense of our needs—needs that foster a healthful life and express our individual proclivities, not “needs” dictated by the mass media. We must restore the human scale in our environment and in our social relations....

Ecology Action East Manifesto, 1969
By the middle 1970's the "energy crisis" was upon us. The price of oil nearly quadrupled within a few years. President Carter appeared on TV and said that the effort to stop relying on imported oil was "the moral equivalent of war," a phrase whose irony was lost on many. The nuclear power industry, which had always been highly encouraged and heavily subsidized by the military, claimed to have the solution. By the year 2000, hundreds of nuclear reactors would provide most of our supply of electricity, and this would solve the energy crisis.*

Meanwhile, a quiet opposition to nuclear power development had slowly been spreading across the country. People in rural areas were discovering that they would bear the most immediate consequences of nuclear power's uncertainties. They were supported by growing numbers of scientists, some of whom had once worked for the nuclear industry and had come to realize just how devastating, and how likely, a major nuclear accident would be. But in the atmosphere of the energy crisis, fighting nuclear power through traditional channels, the courts and the regulatory agencies, was proving increasingly frustrating. Stopping a nuclear industry planning to grow six- or eight-fold in a couple of decades was too urgent to leave to judges and government officials.

In early May of 1977, 1,414 nonviolent demonstrators were arrested trying to occupy a nuclear construction site in the small coastal town of Seabrook, New Hampshire. They were seasoned peace workers and young high school activists, teachers, students, farmers and grandmothers. Refusing to pay bail or otherwise compromise with the authorities, people were held for two weeks in National Guard armories all over southern New Hampshire. During their incarceration, a whole new kind of anti-nuclear organization was created, committed to nonviolent direct action and a high level of internal organizational democracy. Over the next few months, anti-nuclear alliances organized along similar lines arose like new spring seedlings all across the United States.

The new generation of activists had learned many of the important lessons of the sixties. Open, consensual democracy was incorporated into the organizational structure of many of the new alliances. Feminist values and cooperative group process, open sharing of feelings as well as ideas and strategies, and a strong commitment to internal education helped make these organizations more vital and resilient than many of their counterparts of the Vietnam era.

The apparent urgency of the energy problem helped many people understand that a commitment to ecological values meant creating a new way of living on the earth. The wasteful ways of modern industrial society had to be transformed. In terms of energy use, this meant a shift to the use of more natural and more long-term renewable energy sources—the sun, the wind, water and wood. The movement against nuclear power became closely tied to the Appropriate Technology movement, pioneered by E.F. Schumacher's work in India and by urban "community technology" efforts in New York, Washington, D.C. and the Watts section of Los Angeles.

The concept of ecological living went far beyond just changing energy sources, though. Anti-nuclear activists were often people who had begun to explore the whole spectrum of lifestyle-oriented experiments that flourished in the 1970's—whole foods, holistic health, communal living and a wealth of new approaches to personal and spiritual growth. Large numbers had been influenced by the back-to-the-land movement, through which many people had expressed their disenchchantment with the alienating patterns of urban life (including, for some, life in the antiwar movement) by moving to rural areas. There, they sought a more natural and self-reliant existence, which was now directly threatened by the intrusions of the nuclear industry. To the anti-nuclear movement, these re-emerging rural activists brought skills in organic food raising, making clothing and building houses, as well as a wealth of experiences in cooperative living. To the new generation of activists, the back-to-the-landers represented the hope that an ecological way of life was not only necessary, it was indeed possible.

By the early eighties, commercial nuclear power development in the United States had come to a standstill. No new reactors had been ordered for a decade and increasing numbers of planned and even partially built plants were being cancelled. A steadily worsening international political climate moved thousands of anti-

*In fact, during the late 1970's only 10% of the oil consumed in this country was being used to make electricity.
nuclear activists to broaden the focus of their concerns to highlight, once again, the problems of peace and disarmament.

In Europe, a similar ecological movement had been developing, but this time the Europeans were several years ahead. One reason is that the European anti-nuclear power movements did not need to "start over" to the degree that their counterparts in this country felt they had to. In many places—Holland, Britain, the cities of West Germany—the movement of the sixties did not appear to collapse toward the end of the Vietnam War as it did here, but continued to evolve and build support throughout the 1970's. Political organizations and counter-cultural institutions could often trace their histories back through several waves of activism and had more readily adapted to the changing political climate. In West Germany, the government's overreaction to the appearance of urban terrorism in the middle 1970's caused thousands of people with activist histories to be banned from government jobs. This made the creation of counter-institutions and an alternative economy much more of a real necessity.

The first nuclear power site occupation took place two years before Seabrook in a small town called Wyhl near the French border of West Germany. Over a two-year period, thousands of anti-nuclear activists had worked closely with local citizens to create a large alternative village on a site that had been chosen for a major nuclear installation. Confrontations with the federal police were sometimes violent but, with visible active support, both local and international, occupiers were able to hold their own until it was clear no nuclear plants would be built in Wyhl.

In other corners of West Germany, direct action campaigns culminating in large site occupations were able to hold nuclear power development somewhat in check. Often these campaigns were accompanied by well-organized Citizen Initiatives that pursued more traditional political channels and involved large numbers of local residents. But in the highly centralized Federal system established in West Germany after World War II, political initiatives at the local level seemed to have little chance of really changing national policies. A long-term campaign involving many thousands of people was not enough to block the construction of a new airport runway though an endangered forest outside Frankfurter. As early as 1978, activists in some regions felt compelled to try running candidates for seats in their state legislatures and in the city council of West Berlin.

In March of 1979, several hundred delegates from a wide variety of ecological, political and alternative-seeking groups gathered in Frankfurt for the founding convention of a new Political Association, The Greens.* The Greens, from the beginning, were to be more than just a political party. They were committed to running candidates for electoral office but, at the same time, were to be an alliance of local, grass-roots activists all across the country, a bridge between the direct action movements, the Citizen Initiatives and people involved in electoral efforts. Electoral campaigns and service in local and national legislatures would serve to "supplement" their (their word) local, largely extra-parliamentary efforts.

Greens who ran for elective office would not be the "leaders," nor would they aspire to personal political power. They would be delegates from the various citizens' movements working to advance the ideas of those movements in the country's legislative bodies. The Greens embraced an identity as the "anti-party":

We shall not accept any political careerists and we do not want professional politicians. Green state parliament delegates are accountable to their voters. . . . For them it is clear that they will continue working in their local party organizations or citizen action groups even after the election.

—Program of the Greens of the state of Hesse

Petra Kelly, an American-educated member of the Greens' first parliamentary delegation, explained their approach in her book, Fighting for Hope:

We aim to democratize parliament as much as possible, putting the issues, and the costs of solving them, squarely before the

*The Green organization in West Germany continues to be known simply as "Die Grünen." The Greens. The word "party" has never been a part of their title. The identification of political formations by a color has in fact been a part of the German political tradition for some time—the Social Democrats are the "reds," the Christian Democrats are "black," and so on—but the Greens are the only ones known solely by their color.
public. We must set ourselves uncompromising programmatic objectives in order to stimulate debate and discussion inside and outside parliament. A place in parliament, together with the success of a non-violent opposition movement in the streets, should, we hope, put us in a position to shake people out of their apathy and acquiescence.*

The Greens' first national program came to be based upon the "four pillars": the ecological, social, base (or grass-roots) democratic and nonviolent. They proposed a "radical reorganization of our short-sighted economic rationality," a rethinking of the assumptions of industrial growth and the throw-away society. The domination of nature and of human by human would be replaced by an "active partnership with nature and human beings" living in human-scaled and self-governing communities. Both environmental pollution and the miserable living and working conditions that many people experience are results of an economy based upon competition and of the "concentration of economic power in [both] state and private-capitalist monopolies." The Greens' social program calls for a new type of social system, one not "ruled by economic power," but governed in an open, participatory manner, in accordance with the principles of ecology and social justice.

Democracy to the German Greens means both the empowerment of people in communities to make the decisions that affect their lives, and the embedding of decentralized principles in the structure of their own organization. Their 1983 program explained:

A party which did not have this kind of structure would never be in a position to convincingly pursue an ecological policy in the context of parliamentary democracy.

Policy decisions of the Greens are made first at the local level and then at large assemblies of delegates where, at least in the early years, policy decisions were made consensually rather than by voting. Green representatives in the parliament are elected along with an alternate so they can return to local political activities.

**By 1985, Petra Kelly, now an international figure, was to earn the disdain of many Greens for her refusal to rotate out of office after serving for two years (see Chapter 5)."
work within the larger West German peace movement for a more
grass-roots approach, and have been in the forefront of the search
for alternative defense strategies (Chapter 6).

It has become increasingly important to vote for what one
believes to be right on the basis of content rather than wasting
one's vote on lesser evils . . . We demand a radical rethink [ing]
of all the fundamental issues facing society on the part of the estab-
lished parties.

—Petra Kelly, in Fighting for Hope

In a parliamentary system, it often takes a coalition of parties to
bring together the majority of votes necessary to create stable
governments. Since 1984, a major division has erupted in the ranks
of the German Greens between those who would seek to join in
coalitions with the powerful Social Democratic Party (SPD) in
exchange for a more direct role in setting government policies, and
those who believe that joining the government would destroy the
Greens' ability to function as a principled opposition force of non-
politicians advocating thoroughgoing long-term changes. For the
'realists' (or Realos, the practitioners of realpolitik) changing institu-
tions by gaining political power is the primary goal, even if that
means entering into governing coalitions with the Social
Democrats. For the "fundamentalists" (or Fundis, those in funda-
mental opposition to present ways) it is more important to mount a
strong ecological opposition to whichever party is currently in
power.

In the state of Hesse in 1985, the Greens were offered the oppor-
tunity to name one of their own to be Minister of the Environment if
they would join in a governing coalition with the Social Democrats.
After many months of debate, the Greens agreed to accept the offer,
hoping to acquire state aid for a variety of alternative-oriented
projects. The new minister, however, was also responsible for
administering a number of highly controversial projects, including
a reactor that processes plutonium to manufacture nuclear fuel
rods, and a proposed new toxic waste depot.

As the 1987 national elections approached, the debate became
more strident. The Realos accused the Fundis of sacrificing oppor-
tunities to change national policy. The Fundis accused Realos of
being willing to compromise away all matters of principle for the
sake of electoral success and acceptability. In September of 1986, a
national conference of Greens endorsed a proposal to approach the
Social Democrats with a coalition offer if the SPD would change its
positions on a number of key issues. This move was seen by some
observers as the demise of the Fundi position within the Greens.
However, Greens across West Germany continue to reject efforts
by some Realos to restructure the party along more professional
political lines. The 1986 Congress affirmed both the Greens' iden-
tity as an instrument of the broader social movements and their
critique of the international market economy. When the polls
closed in January of 1987, the Greens had won fifteen additional
seats and the ruling right-center coalition was left with a con-
siderably narrower majority than before. The continuing debate
over "red-green" coalitions returned to the state and local levels,
with the Green Environmental Minister in Hesse, Joschka Fischer,
resigning in the continuing controversy over the Alkem plutonium
plant.

In addition to the forty-two delegates in the national Bundestag,
thousands of Greens now sit in state parliaments and in local county
and town councils all across the country. Though many Fundis con-
tinue to criticize their movement's increasing accommodation to
the ways of conventional politics, it is clear that the Greens' parlia-
mentary involvements have changed the way most members view
the party's role.*** Indeed, some people who have been active for
many years in the West German antinuclear and peace movements
have been drifting away from the Greens, believing that their
increasing immersion in parliamentary politics has made the
Greens just another cog in the machinery of destruction.

***Rudolph Bahro, an advocate of fundamental opposition and one of
the most prominent voices of Green politics in Europe, resigned from the West
German Green party in June of 1985 after a key parliamentary compromise
on the issue of animal experimentation. The Green representatives in
the national parliament eschewed demands of animal rights activists for a
thoroughgoing ban on animal experiments, opting for a relatively mild
form of regulation. For Bahro, this compromise was symbolic of the
increasing accommodation of the Greens to the needs of the industrial
system, which he sees as a predictable consequence of their increasingly
electoral focus.
By the spring of 1984, Green movements and political parties were visible all across Europe. Green delegates had been elected to state local legislatures in nearly every country in Europe and many countries had elected Greens to the European Parliament of the Common Market. In Canada, a Green Party had surfaced with a primarily electoral focus, but most chapters lacked the strong ties to local grass-roots efforts that have characterized many of their European counterparts.

The first move toward a Green organization in the United States occurred at the North American Bioregional Congress in May of 1984. There, a group of people committed to spreading Green ideas in this country met for several days and drafted a pioneering statement of Green principles:

Recognizing the urgency of our planetary situation and the opportunities for choosing new directions, Green political movements are arising around the world. None of the traditional political forces, whether from left, right or center, is responding adequately to the destruction of ecosystems and the web of crises related to that destruction.

Later that summer, the Green movement in the United States got off to a somewhat rocky start. Four members of the Green working group at the Bioregional Congress chose to invite a larger group of people to St. Paul, Minnesota, to continue the discussions begun in May. Some believed that a national Green party should be established in the United States within the coming year. Other participants, however, felt that the St. Paul gathering itself violated the principles of openness and grass-roots democracy that have defined the Green movement internationally. Instead of a national body “representing” a spectrum of Green constituencies, many felt strongly that local and regional Green alliances first needed aid in establishing themselves. As a broader Green movement began to develop, regional groups could then federate together through an openly democratic process that would have earned the right to call itself Green.

Thus, the new organization declared itself the Committee of Correspondence, after the locally-based network of people from Maine to Georgia that helped to spark the American Revolution. People from different corners of the country were to return home and begin seeking out people interested in spreading Green ideas. A national clearinghouse was established, which eventually based itself in Kansas City. People inquiring about the new Green network would be put in contact with groups and individuals in their own home regions. By the end of 1986, a regular national newsletter was spreading news among Green groups from coast to coast and several independent Green publications were helping to flesh out the diversity of opinion and organizing methods that give the Green movement its vitality.

The first regional Green conference in New England attracted close to two hundred participants, and twenty local Green groups have since affiliated themselves with the New England Committees of Correspondence. Bioregional groups in northern California, the Midwestern prairie, the Pacific Northwest and dozens of other places have become engaged in discussing Green principles. Green groups in Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area and even New York City have attracted substantial followings. From Maine to California, Greens have undertaken projects in their communities and campaigned for public office on platforms of ecological and social awareness. In July, 1987, the first public gathering of Greens from across the United States attracted over 1500 participants representing more than 80 local and regional Green groups.

In Chapter 7, we will return to the question of how the Green movement can establish itself in this country. We will look at the variety of local efforts that express Green principles and examine some possible next steps. First, though, it is necessary to take a closer look at the principles of Green politics and how they might apply to the pressing ecological and social dilemmas we all face.