

About Us

The Ecological Sustainability website is a co-operative publishing venture that was launched at the start of 2008. We are based in the city of Newcastle Upon Tyne in the North-East of England, though we have close associates in a number of countries, mainly the USA, Canada and Australia. We are not affiliated to any political party. Our main aim is to spread what we feel are more radical ideas about the nature of sustainability and the construction of what might be called a 'sustainable Earth society'. More particularly, we want to help bring back the broad green movement to its ecological roots, from which, we believe, it has become detached. We also seek to spread this message amongst other radical forces such as the anti-globalisation groupings. A small venture like this website cannot really aspire to do much more than that.

The roots of the website go back to 1992 and an attempt to launch a serious quarterly magazine devoted to the examination of current affairs from a deep green perspective. It was given the name *Real World* to draw attention to what was seen as the unreality of the dominant worldview, including mainstream politics. Conventional radical alternatives, it was felt, were founded on the same unearthly fantasies of open-ended growth.

Initially *Real World* was the formal journal of the Green Party of England and Wales but, after a parting of the ways, it became an independent publication. It brought together a small number of individuals worried that the fundamental ecological perspective was being lost by the broad green movement. It survived 19 issues. During its lifespan, it published what we feel was material that has stood the test of time, some of which will be posted on this site in due course.

A parallel project was the *Deep Green Resource Guide* which sought to lead activists to information sources they might use in their campaigns. It has been posted on a number of websites in the last few years. That too is being updated and will be made available on this site, in two forms: a list of 'top twenty' books as a basis for a core 'eco-library' and a series of bibliographic studies on specific issues and debates.

The launch of this site was influenced by certain specific factors. Some excellent journals like the American *Wild Earth* had ceased publication. Surviving 'green' magazines like *The Ecologist* had taken a 'populist' turn. This was quite understandable and has probably helped to spread basic green ideas more widely. The cost has been the virtual disappearance of material with real analytical depth and deep ecological understanding. *Resurgence* too plays a very positive role but it generally takes a 'good news' approach. Conversely, it falls back on vague laments when it comes to the challenge of diagnosing what is wrong with the world. At other times, most evident in magazines like *Green Futures*, a rather fatuous 'things-are-getting-better' approach prevails, coupled to much obfuscation about the generally malign role of government and private business. Their failings are, of course, nothing compared to those of the mainstream media which have either failed to address the 'big issue' of our times or given quite misleading treatment of it. In the better cases like *The Guardian*, a veritable schizophrenia prevails. Thus there may be the odd article about the destructive impact of say, the ski industry (albeit usually in a muted manner). Yet it will be surrounded by pages of editorial text and adverts drooling over new chalet complexes, chair lifts and snow machines as well as cheap air flights to them.

Indeed, the worse the global ecological crisis has become, the less interested many people seem to be. Not surprisingly both publishers and broadcasters focus their attention on other matters that might capture the interest of fickle audiences, most of whom just want to be made to feel good. Sadly that will not bring about a happy ending. We want to get back to basics: the overarching and all-pervading issue of ecological sustainability.

The decision to use the Internet was something that was forced upon us. Lack of time, energy and money made it impossible to sustain the publication of *Real World*. Furthermore, the number of independent publishers has declined, making it harder still to broadcast the 'deep green' message. The virtual disappearance of 'radical' bookshops and other such outlets has further reduced those opportunities.

As some of the material on the site highlights, we are no fans of computerisation. We believe that life could be lived convivially and sustainably without a single computer. In many ways, the advent of computerised systems and of cyberspace have aggravated a number of existing environmental, social and cultural problems whilst creating new ones of their own. But we operate

in a world not of our making and have had to adapt to the only means of communication open to us.

Politics of the Ecological Sustainability website

A summary of the ideological basis of our material is given in the 'welcome' section. The core perspective we seek to broadcast might be summarised in bullet points thus:

- The crisis we face is a crisis of crises, a fundamental crunch, not a short-term blip like a stock market fall. Society's responses must be assessed in the light of its all-embracing and far-reaching nature. 'Peak oil' alone will force dramatic changes upon society. It is quite wrong, however, to focus one-dimensionally on that issue or, say, carbon emissions. They are just parts of a bigger picture whose character would not be fundamentally altered if global warming turned out to be non-existent.
- Other forms of life have intrinsic value, irrespective of human advantage. Conservation policies based on simply utilitarian considerations are doomed to fail. Demands to satisfy some short-term human welfare expectation are always likely to justify more sacrifices of non-human Nature. Moreover, it is seldom possible to save individual species in isolation. It is whole habitats, their health and integrity, that are the real issue.
- The principle of 'treading lightly' should guide all relationships, both between people and between humans and non-humans. In any mixed community, there will be competing demands but, as far as possible, these should be resolved on the basis of least harm and long-term protection of life-support systems.
- Human population growth is the primary source of unsustainable impacts on both environmental and often social systems, both in terms of irreducible direct impacts and of multiplier effects on other sources. Human numbers are now in the state of 'overshoot'.
- Per capita consumption and inappropriate technology add their own discrete pressures, sometimes quite separately, but usually coupled to those of generated by human numbers.
- Population levels coupled to resource-intensive lifestyles and technologies have created a global society that, taken collectively and gross disparities within it notwithstanding, is already in the zone of 'overdevelopment'. A general policy of 'think shrink' will usually be the only road to sustainability.
- 'Sustainable Development' is normally a matter of verbal obfuscation and policy fudge that tries to keep something resembling 'business-as-usual' on the road, whilst denying the need to more fundamental change to values, lifestyles and institutions.
- Resolution of poverty and other inequities can only come about in a sustainable way if addressed within the framework of what the Earth can sustain. Redistribution, not economic growth, is the only durable way forward.
- Other issues on a purely social agenda must be addressed within that same framework. No matter how valid or urgent a particular social problem might be, remedial policies cannot be justified if they endanger other species or threaten overall ecological sustainability. It is vital to avoid inside-out thinking, i.e. the thought pattern that starts from individuals and works outwards, instead of proceeding from the ecological context and working inwards.
- Though the perspective of this website is largely anti-capitalist, it is important to avoid simplistic black-and-white categorisations. Market tools may have a useful part to play in some situations, not least because of their simplicity. By contrast, past planned economies have suffered greatly from bureaucratism, if not much worse. Phrase-mongering about 'popular planning' tends to avoid the practicability of meaningful participation in a mass society. Ultimately education and a change in values are the key, for which new economic tools and technological innovation are no substitute.
- Political categorisation along a one-dimensional 'Left' versus 'Right' spectrum is largely sterile, another variant of unproductive either-or thinking. It is necessary and desirable to take elements, as appropriate, from most traditional politics. We can learn much, for example,

from 'conservative' thinkers like Edmund Burke and 'liberals' like John Stuart Mill. The same is true of such diverse currents as the British 'Arts and Crafts' Movement, Guild Socialism and the Co-operative Movement. Karl Marx was such a perceptive thinker that it would be foolish to ignore the many useful insights he bequeathed, even if many of his followers vulgarised his legacy.

But many vital frameworks such as steady-state economics, bioregionalism and the intrinsic value of wildlife and habitat conservation are quite separate from those of most major political traditions. We feel that the early green movement was correct to proclaim itself "neither left nor right but ahead". It was wrong in principle and detrimental in practice that the movement began to define itself along an outdated spectrum or at least be perceived by outsiders to have done so.

- It is important to avoid 'radical nostalgia' and romantic thinking about past era, not least notions of noble 'eco-savages'. The evidence about hunter-gatherer and 'primitive' agricultural societies is mixed, both regarding environmental impacts 'without' and social oppression within. Certainly we should avoid the cult of the new and the accompanying unwillingness to learn from the past. We should also cherish the architectural and other bequests from previous generations. But the human track record has many stains. More importantly, we cannot, in any case, put back the clock.
- It is similarly wrong to give a 'carte blanche' endorsement to 'aboriginal' or 'first peoples' rights, especially if it opens up more habitat to destruction.
- The same consideration applies to the nation-state. National sovereignty cannot be a justification for ecological vandalism. However any support for intervention into the affairs of others must be guided by the principle of 'primum non nocere', something so spectacularly and dangerously ignored in recent years. So-called 'peacekeeping' interventions have usually stoked up the fires of future conflict, even when made from benign motives.
- The widespread cult of localism across the green movement and elsewhere is also misguided. Certainly things should be done at the lowest practicable level. This might well be truly local yet often it will be at a bioregional level. On occasion, only global measures can offer any hope of success. We need to think and act, locally, bioregionally and globally.
- Similarly we recognise the need for state action. Though governments have often been and remain a big part of the problem, they can play a vital role, not least in halting environmental destruction (e.g. leaded petrol and CFCs), economic exploitation (e.g. minimum wage and equal pay measures) and social neglect (e.g. public health care). They can play an equally essential part in opening the door to better alternatives, especially by switching subsidies from the unsustainable to more sustainable activities. Politicians are there to give a lead!
- The road to ecological sustainability will not be found via 'empowermentism', i.e. simplistic calls for direct democracy and so forth. We further reject analyses that always put the blame elsewhere, not least the machinations of big business. Private profiteering and the distortions of any market-based system are certainly a major problem but they are far from the only ones. Instead we recognise that many ordinary citizens play a willing and indeed wilful role in destructive 'business-as-usual'.
- Though we will attack, as appropriate, 'vested interests', it is equally important to recognise what some have called the "tyranny of commonplace decisions", others the "tragedy of micro-motives". In other words, bad consequences can flow from good intentions, especially when enacted by sufficient weight of individuals.
- It is especially naïve to blame the mass media for mass ignorance, consumerism and other social failings. There is no evidence that the media 'brainwash' their audiences, with most alleged effects being greatly exaggerated. To a large extent, the media give people what they want. That said, we fully agree with those critics who warn of the dangers of media ownership being concentrated in so few hands.
- Similarly we perceive 'popular culture' to be deeply dumbed down. In fact, the ecological crisis ultimately boils down to a crisis of human culture and character.

- We take no position on the vexed question of human nature. Instead we feel that humans have shown themselves to be capable of appalling crimes as well as truly altruistic behaviour. Our stance is that smaller societies - small populations, comparatively frugal lifestyles, modest technologies, limited scale institutions and boundaries – are likely to be in a position to do less harm if more negative human characteristics prevail while than damage they might will be more easily stopped and repaired. If only Hitler had been confined to Bavaria!

Another way to explain our politics is to list some of the theorists and other writers on whose shoulders our proposed publications would stand. What we would call the 'ecocentric' perspective might be traced back many centuries, including major elements of Taoism from ancient China. However, it is probably most useful to spotlight more modern voices. They include, in roughly historical order: John Muir, Paul Sears, Aldo Leopold, William Vogt, Lewis Mumford, Rachel Carson, Frank Fraser Darling, Paul Ehrlich, Fritz Schumacher, David Brower, Wendell Berry, Herman Daly, David Ehrenfeld, John Livingston, and Neil Postman. Two publications, both from 1972, stand out: *The Blueprint for Survival* (in which Teddy Goldsmith played a seminal role) and the *Limits to Growth* Report. The kernel of this tradition is the view of people, not as conquerors of nature, but as "plain members and citizens of it", in the words of the American forester and conservationist Aldo Leopold.

Actually a few novels also feature elements of our standpoint. Perhaps they provide a more accessible flavour than more formal political and philosophical works. These include sci-fi classics like Kurt Vonnegut's *Player Piano* (1952), *The Space Merchants* (Pohl and Kornbluth, 1953) and Marge Piercy's *Body of Glass* (1993). The darkly comic novels of Carl Hiaasen should also be mentioned, not least the first and still one of his best, *Tourist Season* (1986). Then there is Ed Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1976) which encouraged the practice of 'ecotage'. Perhaps the closest to our view is Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1977) and its prequel *Ecotopia Emerging* (1977). The poetry and other writings of Gary Snyder must also be noted.

EcoCentrism versus Egocentrism

The 'EcoCentrist' vision is, then, one of a society in harmony with ecological rhythms, capacities and tolerances, including those of our own human nature. This agenda emphasises, for example, *sufficiency*, rather than open-ended demands. It stresses personal and collective *responsibility* and *duty*, rather than the egotism and self-indulgence characteristic of consumerism and me-centred politics. It advocates *common standards* and *values*, rejecting the 'politically correct' tendency to treat everything as equally valid and purely a matter of personal preference. It prioritises *regional self-reliance* and *community enterprise*, not dependence on the world market. It demands *caution*, leaving what works well alone, instead of dashing ahead with dangerous innovations like genetic engineering or the clearance of functioning communities to make way for 'development'. It favours an ecologically appropriate use of technologies like solar energy and organic farming. It stands for *real security* from environmental and economic devastation, harnessing the resources now devoted to military aggrandisement. Around such assumptions, a new foundation for decision-making can be laid.

Such a platform stands in marked contrast to the dominant value systems and priorities of today. Their basic beliefs manifest themselves politically in different ways. On the one hand, there are the advocates of economic laissez-faire but conservative in other matters, and, on the other, supporters of a social and cultural free-for-all but who usually support state intervention in the economic realm. Though one tendency condemns the other, they share the same basic belief of 'doing your own thing'.

Both brands of 'permissiveness' need emotionally and economically weakened individuals on which to feed. Economic permissiveness is aided and abetted by social permissiveness, which encourages the notion of expanding needs. This in turn has encouraged the spread of 'infantilism', an increasing number of child-adults, 'grown-ups' characterised by a childish desire for constant and immediate gratification, with an equally childish craving for innovation and novelty, paralleled by disdain for continuity and stability.

The core values and priorities of contemporary society might be best characterised as 'egocentrism' might be given. At their heart is a self-centred perception of reality. Even the word 'environment' is often defined egotistically: everything around an individual. The credo of

egocentrism is one of moreness, recognising no limits. Any problem, it is naively believed, can be solved through the right mixture of bigger economic incentives, more sophisticated management techniques, and technological wizardry. Intellectually, it is matched by equally childlike dreams of omnipotence in which our species will become freed from what President Reagan revealingly once called the 'surlly bonds of Earth'. We dream that inventions like nuclear fusion, genetic engineering and artificial intelligence will overcome all constraints, even the very processes of ageing and perhaps death itself.

However, the consumption of more commodities and therapies do not guarantee lasting happiness; instead dissatisfaction and restlessness flourish. Together, economic liberalism and social permissiveness have generated demands which are bankrupting the Earth whilst, at the same time, undermining social stability and eroding individual self-reliance and self-esteem.

A North American phrase, the 'conservator society', suggests the alternative we need to build, in contrast to today's destructive demand culture. This means that the number one priority today must be the maintenance and rehabilitation of the conditions for the survival of our species - and that of other species - on Earth. Survival does not mean just the barest minimum necessary for existence, though, globally, millions are deprived of even that prospect due to the greed of the richer sections of the world). The goal must be a fair opportunity for everyone to enjoy, in a sustainable manner, a fulfilling life without robbing other cultures, future generations and other species of their chance to thrive. Concepts like carrying capacity, limits to growth and biodiversity are the touchstones of this politics.

Such a vision does not idealise the past in the manner of the Nostalgia Industry and silly notions of some Merrie Olde England. It does demand, however, respect for the achievements of older generations and cultures, whilst advocating humility about the capacity of humans to manage the future. It acknowledges the intrinsic values of the Earth's diversity of life and landscapes as well as our dependence upon them.

We are certainly critical of what is usually called 'Progress'. To us, it is the modern opium of the people. Now we certainly believe that there could and should be specific advances in many aspects of modern life. However, we dispute the possibility of open-ended and across-the-board advancement. Instead we believe that there are insuperable limits to what humans can sustainably do, with diminishing returns and increasingly negative trade-offs taking their toll. As a result, it is vital to think in terms of an optimum rather than a maximum. As those great sages Mick Jagger and Keith Richards once put it, "you can't always get what you want". They might have added: "...and what you can sustainably get is often less than you wanted". Or, as Cervantes suggested, it is possible to have "too much of a good thing".

The vision of ecological sustainability is fair in ways that traditional egalitarianism never has been. The cornucopian policies of left-wing politics can only diminish the prospects of future human generations and those of non-human species. It is also thoroughly democratic: totalitarian solutions are non-solutions since they are deeply unstable. Stalinism and Nazism, for example, destroyed human communities and environment with neither restraint nor remorse. Interestingly, many of those who talk about the threat from 'eco-fascism' belong to political traditions which denied or acted as apologists for the monstrosities committed in countries like Maoist China. The building of a sustainable society without popular consent and participation will be as successful as Prohibition was against alcohol consumption. If ethnic and social groups in general cannot find common ways to survive, it seems all too likely that none will.

We recognise that broad brush principles only go so far. It is also necessary to provide some outline at least of measures needed in the here and now. Further there need to be clear priorities. Bodies like to the Green Party allowed their programme to become a mish-mash of policies that piled up as one conference followed another. Worse, they began to just become a longer and longer list of entitlements deemed to be due to individuals, without any ecological costing or consideration of basic logistics.

Policy Pointers

Appropriate policies will be those that fairly and humanely limit human numbers, per capita consumption levels, land uses and technologies to well within the safety margins of ecological carrying capacity. This will be a level which do not deplete non-renewable resources faster than safe and sustainable substitutes become available; do not consume renewable resources faster

than they replenish themselves; do not exceed the safe absorption capacities of local watersheds, soil systems and airsheds; do not endanger the continued existence of other species; and neither exploit other species, except for essential purposes, nor inflict avoidable pain and suffering.

In terms of overall policy, contraction, not development, might be a more honest description of the task facing humanity. In other words, the challenge is to slim down our bloated society, to reduce the weight of humanity's ecological 'footprint' to one which the Earth can sustain and which does not stamp out other species. Quite radical changes in both the institutional framework and individual lifestyles would be necessary. Generally, human society would be smaller, life slower and, once the initial transition was made, further large-scale change, especially technological innovation, would approach with great caution.

Of course, at present such thoughts are deeply unpopular since, as noted above, we live in a culture where expansion and progress are synonymous. Nevertheless, from the broad perspective of human evolution, Industrial Growth Society is likely to be a very short-lived aberration. An increasing number of scientists, perhaps most notably Professor E. O. Wilson, are producing evidence that not just our physical well-being but our psychological and spiritual health depends upon the resumption of a more modest human role in the totality of life. It is the transition to that goal that is so difficult, not the destination.

We favour the development of a green 'transitional programme', one with policies that might help to halt the waste and destruction, open the door to more sustainable structures and practices as well as mobilise the necessary level of public support. Such a strategy is the only way to avoid the opposing pitfalls of the 'minimum' programme (which solves nothing) and 'maximum' programme (which attracts too little support to solve anything). We would add that realism should be judged in terms of what really will solve problems, not what the power-that-be or the general public might be willing to accept any point in time. After all, most past social changes took even radical critics of contemporary society by surprise. We simply do not know whether there is still time to save the Earth before irreparable damage is done and all chance of building a sustainable society is washed away.

Agreement to differ

On some broad issues, there might have to be a degree of compromise. The most significant case is that of premeditated violence. Pacifism is a standpoint that is certainly worthy and coherent; bodies like the Quakers deserve great respect. Yet it is a very basic fact of life that survival involves the killing or suppression of other living things. Of course, there is usually a balance of 'giving' and 'taking'. Most creatures only kill to satisfy essential needs. The rest of Nature is largely free from the systematic cruelty and needless destructiveness that have characterised many human 'civilisations'.

Resort to deliberate and sustained violence has often led to more losses for both victor and vanquished than any gains that would justify that cost. Indeed, most violent revolutions and wars have spawned outcomes quite contrary to what the belligerents expected. World War 2, for instance, left large parts of Europe more enslaved after its conclusion than had been the case before. Furthermore, many 'national' resistance / liberation movements often have little genuine popular support, relying on coercion of their own people, triggering destructive reprisals (mainly against non-participants) and, worst of all, becoming so brutalised in the course of struggle that they become quite unfit for subsequent government.

Yet it is also possible to justify violence in certain cases, not least the killing of terrorists before they can perpetrate their crime. Those trying to stop wildlife poachers can hardly be expected not to defend themselves if attacked by armed gangs. In terms of national defence policy, it has been long and widely recognised that a people have a right to resist invasion. But certain policies such as the use of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons of mass destruction are incompatible with the protection of people and planet, whatever the circumstances.

For all the difficult moral and political questions raised by this issue, a compromise between pacifists and non-pacifists could be built around the many matters on which there could be strong agreement: nuclear disarmament, ban on land mines and on chemical and biological weapons, limited armed forces, a willingness to exhaust all avenues of negotiation and peaceful reconciliation etc

On some matters, there should be tolerance of different viewpoints. Thus the merits of vegetarianism versus carnivorous diets are less important than the need to phase out 'factory farming' of animals and industrialised fishing whilst shifting to, at least, a low-meat cuisine. It is vital to put first things first, however. The angry debate in Britain about blood sports is actually something of 'red herring', a diversion from the real issue of habitat conservation, a far, far bigger threat to many more creatures and indeed entire species. There are also many issues that can be put on one side since they are not critical and stances on them can only further fragment true friends of the Earth: drug laws, the future of the monarchy, House of Lords reform, the validity of 'alternative' medicine, etc.

Working Together

It is, of course, dangerously easy for small groups to sit sniping from the sidelines and indulge in sectarian point-scoring. We hope our postings will give due recognition of the value of work done by those from other political traditions. not least advocates of sustainable development', no matter how misguided we feel their position to be. Certainly, we are very critical, for example, of the ideas and policies associated with Sustainable Development. This does not mean that there is nothing of worth in initiatives such as Local Agenda 21 or other projects launched by the Earth Summit. Nor should attention be drawn away from the far worse failings of currents like Neo-Liberalism.

However, certain positions and strategies are incompatible with the EcoCentrism advocated here. There can be no truck with racism, religious fundamentalism nor any political currents that justify the monstrosities of Hitler, Stalin and Mao. The warped logic of my-enemy's-enemy-is-my-friend is equally unacceptable. In this twisted perspective, quite abhorrent regimes and movements are deemed to be acceptable just because they oppose or are opposed by bodies against which progressive groups are fighting. In the case of undeniably bad actions by such new-found friends, there is often a resort to various mitigating and extenuating circumstances to excuse the otherwise inexcusable. Thus, within the British Left, the slogan of "unconditional support", repeated like some macho mantra, was used to 'justify' the IRA bombings in the 70s and the 'necktie' executions in the townships of South Africa. The moral putrefaction of this position was intensified by the fact that its advocates were taking a stand that, at no danger to themselves, endorsed activities that put others, and often quite innocent people, at great risk.

Certainly there should be a united front against threats from, say, racism, corporate-led globalisation or specific developments such as a new wave of nuclear power plants. Co-operation, however, should not require a cover-up of real differences nor silence on-going debate. We should never forget that, as an American professor, Gary Coates, puts it in *Resettling America* (Brick House, 1982), "what appears at first to be merely two paths to shared goals turns out, on closer inspection, to be two separate paths to very different goals".

On Agency

It is one thing to condemn the dominant social order or demand alternatives. But it is another to identify a plan to get from here to there. One thing is sure. Just every conference or position paper ever devoted to strategy within the broad green movement (and probably not just there) has been largely a waste of time and energy. Most 'strategists' in radical movements are like armchair generals manoeuvring armies that exist largely in their own imagination. The fact that green, socialist and anarchist organisations remain utterly marginalised suggests that all the reams of paper and all the conference hours devoted to debate over strategy have yielded rather barren fruit.

We would love to announce that it has found the magic key that opens the door marked 'agency of social change'. Regrettably we have had no such luck. Perhaps the best that we can hope is that society might just muddle through the terrible mess it is now creating. But we are unable to identify obvious saviours. Those who thought they had done just that have been confounded by history. Thus the proletariat failed to match Marx's famous projections about its historical role. Many readers will have vain calls for general strikes from leftist groupuscules which, according to their strategists, would in turn be the stepping stone to the long-awaited socialist revolution. Neither happened.

Certainly any placement of faith in will o' the wisps should be avoided. There is little value in strategies based on marginal / marginalised social groups, be it globally (the global 'multitude' of outsiders, identified by theorists such as Toni Negri and Michael Hardt) or locally (ethnic minorities, lifestyle nonconformists, the unemployed, etc). The much used and abused strategy of the 'turn to youth' is equally hopeless. Surely no honest person now can believe in what Gramsci once called the "long march through the institutions", a strategy that was widely advocated after the failure of the May 1968 'events' in France to achieve anything significant. There is no longer time for such a strategy and, in any case, 'entrists' tend to be absorbed by the organisation they join rather than thy capture control of it)

The late Christopher Lasch, the noted American historian and social critic, made the useful point that some socialists and other radicals (e.g. 'Third Worldist' currents, an early exponent of which was the French intellectual Regis Debray) have been too quick to write off the 'ordinary Joe' in countries like the USA and UK. Worse, they have often adopted stances that needlessly alienate such people (Lasch cites the counter-productive disdain with which returning Vietnam veterans were treated in the USA, driving them into the arms of the Right).

Yet most people also care about their children and their prospects. They rue the loss of familiar townscapes and landscapes in the name of 'development'. They also resent 'fat cats', corporate raiders and their ilk. Indeed they seemed prepared to countenance quite radical economic measures, even if, socially, they remain much more (small 'c') conservative. The critical mass necessary to change society is more likely to come from more mature and better educated individuals and groups, ones more prepared to turn such sentiments into actual deeds, be it in their own lifestyles or collective action.

The building of the necessary social forces has more chance if marginal social demands that pointlessly alienate potential support were to be dropped. The wrong strategy might be illustrated by a Green Party national conference at which one of its then leading figures wound up the event by demanding that the Party be really radical and make cannabis decriminalisation one of its major planks. Such politics really are an infantile disorder. We need to stick to bare essentials that address the really urgent challenges of today.

A good example of the kind of 'transitional politics' advocated here was the removal of all public subsidies for environmentally destructive activities. It is a good demand in itself but it would also connect with many people, though it has to be recognised that many trade unions will fight to preserve such grants and tax perks. There are terribly difficult problems in seeking to reconcile people's attitudes and behaviour in their different roles and experiences, be it at work or in the spheres of family life, private consumption and leisure.

In sum, there is no easy or obvious way forward for those deeply concerned about the parlous and worsening state of planet Earth. What chance there might is most likely to be grasped if there is clarity about basic principles. This in turn may help to ensure that sight is not lost of fundamental goals during the necessary process of building of broad alliances and the tactical compromises thereby entailed.

An invitation

The material we publish on the site is there to be shared. Please circulate details to people who might be interested. All we request is an acknowledgement where possible. Of course, donations to our work, not just money but also references to literature we have overlooked, will be gratefully received as well. So too will constructive feedback about the site and topics worth covering.

We can be reached at: epp@blueyonder.co.uk

PS.

We would stress that everything on this site is produced by a handful of people in their spare time, outside of family, work and other such commitments. Please be tolerant of typing and other mistakes: we do our best!

We would also like to thank the many people who have suggested entries for the various bibliographies we post. We cannot check every one but feel sure that the overall standard is high. All the statistics we quote are taken from reputable sources such as the Worldwatch Institute and

serious newspapers like the London *Guardian*. Again, it is easy to get facts wrong but the overall picture we paint is, we believe, correct.