

# Review of *The Green Reader*

ed. Andrew Dobson (Andre Deutsch)

At last, here is a green anthology worthy of its subject. In his introduction, Dobson tackles immediately the problem of what does 'Green' actually mean. He demonstrates that the Green thought involves a comprehensive critique of Industrial Society: it goes deeper than the shallow environmentalism with which it is often confused. He recognises that the issue of 'limits' is central to Green analysis, contrary to the faith in the possibility and desirability of open-ended expansion characteristic of both left- and right-wing ideologies.

The rest of the book is divided into sections concerned, first, with what Greens think is wrong with the world and then how they hope to reverse the present slide to ecological suicide. His selection of excerpts from key texts of the movement is preceded by short commentaries which put them into context. Dobson clearly knows the literature of the Green movement. Though it is easy to spot significant omissions, the book gives a well-rounded overview that, for once, delivers what the publisher's claims on the back cover promise.

Perhaps the fact that Dobson is writing primarily for the British market leads to a neglect of North American authors. This reviewer was flattered, for example, to find an extract on overpopulation by Alec Ponton and himself included yet both of us feel that our own writings on the subject are put into the shade by those from the great ecologists Paul and Anne Ehrlich.

Some key issues are also neglected. Given the recognition rightly given by Dobson to how we think about things, he might have paid more attention to the coming together of televisual and computer technology and their impact on human consciousness, as, for example, recognised by writers such as Theodore Roszak. Another gap is the absence of anything from the critiques of 'resource managerialism' developed in particular by Bill Devall, George Sessions, Neil Evernden and John Livingston.

There are some strange bedfellows. Murray Bookchin is featured yet his attacks on another featured author, Andre Gorz, for example, represent the unacceptable face of polemics. Indeed, Bookchin is probably the most overrated radical writer in North America and Dobson might have drawn attention to those who have refuted the pretensions of 'social ecology' (most notably the Australian writer Robyn Eckersley).

Given Dobson's own definition of Green thinking regarding its rejection of the values and institutions dominant in our society, it was surprising to find space given to that most striking example of accommodation to the status quo, the twin concept of 'green' capitalism and consumerism. It is also a pity that Dobson gives credence (for example, in his preface to Ryle's 'Ecosocialism' and in the piece itself) to the old canard that green writers have ignored issues of power, class and the state (for examples that this is not the case, see Kvaloy's *Ecophilosophy and Ecopolitics* and Georgescu-Roegen's *Inequality, Limits and Growth from a Bioeconomic Point of View*).

There are other weaknesses but it is difficult to imagine how an anthology could please everyone. Michael Allaby's "Thinking Green" demonstrated how badly such projects can be mishandled. Andre Deutsch are to be congratulated for realising that another attempt was needed and in Andrew Dobson they clearly found the right person for the job.

**Sandy Irvine**