

Growing Green

by John Otter

We live in a scary world. Many political, social, economic and environmental practices bode ill for life on Earth. Already conditions in many places are greatly deteriorated. There are basically two types of responses to the fears aroused by these conditions and practices.

One type tries to guarantee safety through religious beliefs and practices which promise salvation, police and military forces which control perceived threats, elected officials which pass laws that provide economic advantages to some, often involving unfettered exploitation of natural resources, etc.

The other type tries to eliminate threatening conditions and underlying practices and to establish congenial ones. It views some of the attempts to guarantee safety as threats to long-term survival. While working for that survival, it tolerates more perceived risk. Greens adhere largely to this type.

Both types share the goal of an enjoyable existence. Although some persons respond with one type or the other depending on the situation, most adhere closely to only one type. The latter hold their type deeply in an emotional/spiritual way that does not lend itself to verbal persuasion. Nevertheless, change is possible when a response of the other type is perceived, consciously or unconsciously, as having reduced a threat. Consequently, working for changes in conditions and practices is more effective in modifying response to fears than protest or opposition. (The latter are often useful for exerting influence however.)

Greens work for change both within and outside the political arena. Although some persons find elections distasteful, elections are important for shifting response to fears. Even though Greens may win only occasionally, the airing of our positions will likely move the winner and his/her party toward the Green's vision. Not to run will likely have the opposite effect. The decisions of bodies of elected officials, albeit often only small steps due to compromises needed for passage or implementation, do move toward or away from our long-term goals.

Still, building the movement is the most important task. Successful efforts, no matter how small, nor in what arena, provided they are acknowledged by others as Green, accomplish that. Successes are possible when Green-responding persons participate in Green actions and let others know about them.

Teamwork among individuals, and with other groups, is nearly always required to accomplish a desired change. In doing so, Greens are guided by their vision of society. The vision is grounded in our key values, which may be expressed in a single sentence as: a non-violent, socially just, participatory democracy, in a harmonious, sustainable relationship with the natural environment, and having a

locally-based, decentralized economy and respectful, nurturing, cooperative relations among citizens, whose lifestyles are personally and globally responsible. Hopefully, every person who wants that world will work to bring it about.