

## **Bioregional Strategy and Political Participation**

No political party, Republican, Democratic or Green is going to put forward a long-range bioregional vision. Bioregionalism is at its core a change in heart, a long-range cultural transformation that affects the mind, feelings, and soul of every human animal and has consequences for every other animal, plant, fungus, and microbe.

But in the short-range some political decisions do matter, and bioregionalists do participate and need to participate wisely in those decisions. Some of the following comments may apply to every political entity -- nation, state, province, county, parish, district, or whatever other political subdivision humans have devised, but I will limit my remarks to one nation, the U.S. of A.

The George W. Bush ultra-conservatism (sometimes masquerading as moderate, bipartisan, and cooperative) is the most dangerous political empowerment since Adolf Hitler. Few things could be more dangerous than Bush's new world order, a U.S. empire supporting the rulership of the largest and most reactionary transnational corporations.

As Bill Moyers put it in a recent public television broadcast, "for the first time in the memory of anyone alive, the entire federal government - the Congress, the Executive, the Judiciary - is united behind a right-wing agenda for which George W. Bush believes he now has a mandate. That mandate includes the power of the state to force pregnant women to give up control over their own lives. It includes using the taxing power to transfer wealth from working people to the rich. It includes giving corporations a free hand to eviscerate the environment and control the regulatory agencies meant to hold them accountable. And it includes secrecy on a scale you cannot imagine. Above all, it means judges with a political agenda appointed for life. If you liked the Supreme Court that put George W. Bush in the White House, you will swoon over what's coming. And if you like God in government, get ready for the Rapture. These folks don't even mind you referring to the GOP as the party of God."

The response of centrist Democrats in the mid-term elections was utterly bankrupt. Charming the muddled middle to vote for you while taking progressives for granted was a tightrope dance pulled off by the amazingly inventive and articulate Bill Clinton. But no one is going to do that again. For one thing, the fully conscious progressive voter is fed up with choosing between obsolete Republican passion and visionless Democratic incrementalism.

Therefore, the only hope is to build a mass movement of support for either a fully progressive Democratic party or the maturing of the Green party into a majority outfit. Indeed, both of these things need to be done. My long-range hope is to simply sideline the Republican party and conservative Democrats along with them.

But in the short-range, namely the 2004 presidential elections, maturing the Green party to majority status is not a realistic goal. So building up the progressive wing of the Democratic party with the hope of nominating in the coming presidential primaries a relatively progressive Democratic candidate is the only viable short-term strategy for unseating the Bush juggernaut. Russell Feingold would be a good choice. But even less progressive persons might be some moderation of the Bush policies.

The founder of the Alliance for Democracy, Ronnie Dugger, writing in the December 2nd issue of the Nation magazine and in the December 6th issue of the Texas Observer, argues that Ralph Nader should not run for president in 2004. He wants all progressive forces to focus on stopping Bush. Dugger is a strong supporter of Nader and recommended that he run in the last election, but now he argues convincingly that the risks of another four years of Bush outweigh all other risks and values. I agree with Dugger that we Green and Bioregional types can better advance our cause by judiciously voting for relatively progressive Democrats when this can mean

unseating the insidious right wing.

It certainly seems wise to me that the progressive forces of this nation find ways to unite behind a widely accepted, and cogent plan for achieving a progressive majority. So here are some proposals for united action among progressive Democrats, Greens, and bioregional types in the U.S. of A.

**One:** Promote full public financing of every state and national election (see Arizona & Maine)

**Two:** Insist on having Green candidates in every debate. Raise hell when this is disallowed.

**Three:** Work toward instant-run-off voting in every state and in the nation. This is the way to end the two-party log jam and muddled-middle politics.

**Four:** Until instant-run-off voting is in place, support rather than oppose honest, progressive Democrats whenever they have a chance to win.

**Five:** Vote Green in most local elections and whenever a conservative Democrat is running.

Putting conservative Democrats into office is worse than voting Republican. It destroys the capability of the Democrats being an opposition party. So let's be intentional spoilers for these mealymouthed, visionless, so-called centrist, poll-watchers.

**Six:** Educate the non-voter on the crucial nature of vigorous participation in the electoral process.

Over 60% of the U.S. population are either frustrated or lethargic about electoral politics of any sort. Most of these are people whose confusion can be awakened and whose passion can be inspired. The harvest is plentiful but the reapers are few.

**Seven:** Continue awakening the population with peace marches, world trade protests, and other signs of resistance to this much too popular media-supported establishment.

These seven proposals can be further elaborated and added to and perfected, but perhaps this outline is sufficient to signal some hope for the hopeless, for hope is a pressing need at the moment.

For the Earth,

Gene Marshall