

Secession, Vermont Style: *The Green Mountains and Dixie — Contrasting Voices for Independence*

Ron Miller

In October 2007, the Declaration of the Second North American Secessionist Convention began by asserting that “The deepest questions of human liberty and government facing our time go beyond right and left, and in fact have made the old left-right split meaningless and dead.”

This is an exciting thought, but does it accurately reflect cultural and political realities? Recent articles in *Vermont Commons* have suggested that the growing rebellion against the federal government, seen in state-sovereignty declarations and a renewed interest in the Tenth Amendment, transcend “red” and “blue” politics and share a commitment to bedrock principles of democracy. I think this is true only in a narrow sense.

Serious conservatives and radical democrats (emphasis on the lowercase d) seem to agree that the “liberty” promised by the American Revolution and Constitution is deeply threatened today by the massive expansion of the federal government’s powers. We have much reason to worry about the enormous control that the national government



Winds of Change: The ski area at Bolton Valley welcomes Vermont’s first industrial wind turbine. BRIAN MOHR / EMBERPHOTO

the Iraq war and every other facet of U.S. foreign policy, by the trashing of due process and other Constitutional rights, by the encouragement given to war profiteers, private security forces, corporate raiders and gamblers. From our perspective on the “left,” the federal government was becoming immensely dangerous because it was unleash-

The Vermont independence movement gained traction during the Bush years, when the federal government was unleashing potent forces of exploitation, violence, and oppression. If we could not stop them, we could at least withdraw our consent.

now exerts over so many aspects of society, and the enormous influence that elite institutions and cliques (corporations, lobbyists, Wall Street, think tanks, the media, and so on) wield on policymaking. Many of us who believe that participatory democracy requires power to be exercised locally and regionally as much as possible, want to explore possible ways to rebalance federal and state/local authority. Others – both conservatives and liberals – see the situation as so dire that they advocate complete political independence – secession – as the only effective remedy. We are all decentralists, but we are not all motivated by the same ideals.

The Paradox of Liberal Decentralism

The Vermont independence movement gained traction during the Bush years. We were horrified and outraged by the naked imperialism of

ing potent forces of exploitation, violence, and oppression. If we could not stop them, we could at least withdraw our consent.

Many sovereignty and secession movements in the U.S., however, are motivated by a quite different worldview, by moral and political concerns associated with the “right.” Free market libertarians and cultural conservatives, who were relatively comfortable with the Bush presidency, view the Obama Administration as a mortal enemy of American liberty and identity. The tea parties, town hall riots, and ugly epithets directed at President Obama do not simply reflect a decentralist critique of federal power, but a deep-seated antipathy to cultural change represented by an African-American president, and his calls (rhetorically, anyway) for greater public responsibility for

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**Vermont’s
statewide independent
news journal**

How an Independent Vermont Can Abolish Usury *And Promote A Sustainable Economy*

Adrian Kuzminski
(Part 1 of 2 Parts)

During this time of financial and economic crisis, it is worth recalling that credible alternatives to our current financial system exist, if largely unrecognized, and deserve serious consideration. There is a vast, diverse, and largely unread body of literature on monetary questions. Some of this is an underground literature caught up with dubious conspiracy theories, eccentrics and cranks, and unlikely utopian proposals, but some of it is the work of serious, evidence-based, pragmatic thinkers offering plausible alternatives.

One of the latter was the now-neglected 19th-century American proto-populist, Edward Kellogg. Although associated with the Whig Party, he was a kind of godfather to the later populist movement on monetary issues. Perhaps the most profound of American writers on monetary issues, Kellogg advocated a decentralized but nationally regulated monetary system based on non-usurious, low-interest public loans to individuals. His vision inspired 19th-century century mutualists, greenbackers, populists, and others who sought to restructure the monetary system to redistribute wealth.

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- “Barack Obama and the Future of American Politics” (BOOK REVIEW)
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Editorial

Beyond Barack's Bamboozling: As Obamamania Fizzles, Vermonters Take A Fresh Look At Independence

"The changes that are needed are not just a matter of tinkering around the edges, and they will not come if politicians simply tell us what we want to hear."

Barack Obama; January 2008

"Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."

John Adams; December 1770.

Happy holidays to all of our readers! It was one year ago this month that the majority of U.S. voters (if corporately-owned voting machine counts are to be believed) threw their weight behind a presidential candidate who promised to push the "reset button" and jump-start the United States Empire.

My favorite joke of last fall: Who was the loneliest person in the United States the day after the Obama election?

A Vermont secessionist.

Even funnier is the constant drumbeating about Obama the "progressive," the "liberal," the "Democrat," which is about as accurate as calling Obama a "socialist," a "Communist" or a "terrorist".

Pundits from both the left and the right have completely missed the point of the already-stale "Obama phenomenon." Obama is simply the new chauffeur, the newest driver of the getaway car that is the U.S. Empire.

In a stunning new book entitled *Barack Obama and the Future of American Politics* (Paradigm Publishers, 2009 – reviewed this season at www.vtcommons.org), historian and journalist Paul Street meticulously uncovers the media-manufactured mythology that has cloaked "Brand Obama" these past several years.

His conclusion about the man mainstream liberals (and 70 percent of Vermont voters) pinned their "hope" for "change" on?

"Obama," he writes, "stands to the conservative business-and-empire-friendly side of majority U.S. opinion on key issues like national health insurance, campaign finance, trade, Iraq, and foreign relations in general."

No surprise to our readers – but a wake-up call to those who pinned their hopes on Mr. O.

The Commander-In-Speech's brilliance, of course, lies in his use of carefully cultivated rhetoric designed to convince attentive audiences that he is at least paying "lip service" attention to national problems (witness the so-called national health care "debate") or global crises (climate change and Peak Oil come to mind).

But, with his Harvard/Columbia pedigree, his huge financial and political base of support among the multinational banksters, and his "professorial" demeanor (long on words, short on action), Obama knows better than most that none of these deeply rooted structural problems is ever going to be solved by Establishment imperial interests who seek to profit from exploiting these crises. The United States is an Empire that is simply

too big, too corrupt, and too much governed by entrenched interests to respond to the needs and desires of its citizens. Perhaps the most remarkable demonstration of the emptiness of Obama's calculated posturing? His passage of the largest Pentagon "Defense" budget in history (\$680

A return to our first principles:

We at *Vermont Commons* believe that the United States is no longer a republic governed by its citizens, but an Empire that is essentially ungovernable.

We believe that a sovereign state's right to

'Disaster capitalism' trumps 'the audacity of hope.'

billion) two weeks ago, just days after winning the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize. "Disaster capitalism," in other words, trumps "the audacity of hope."

And that is why *Vermont Commons: Voices of Independence* is here. To remind Vermonters that our 21st-century future is shaping up to look very different from our past, and that the pursuit of economic decentralization, non-violent secession, and political independence for our once-and-future republic is in our best interest.

nonviolently secede, first championed in the United States by the citizens of 19th century New England, is a right that demands re-exploration in the 21st century.

We believe that a 21st century Vermont, working in concert with our neighbors and the rest of the world, may better be able to feed, power, educate and care for its citizens as an independent 21st century republic than as one of fifty states

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UNITED STATES EMPIRE

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size: One Dollar
Servings Per Container 1

Amount Per Serving

Calories 0 Calories from Fat 0

% Daily Value*

Total Pork 100%

Poverty Rate +/-12%

Uninsured 18%

Global CO2 Emissions 25%

National Debt 12.8 trillion

Protein 0%

No Vitamins

No Minerals

*Percent Daily Values based on 307 million US population

Ingredients: Oil, Coffee, Pork, Corn, Soy, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Federal Stimulus, Nuclear Waste, Weapons of Mass Destruction, Government Subsidies, Investment Firm Employee Retreats, Civilian Deaths, Ponzi Schemes, Insider Trading, Cars

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Letters to the Editor

IMAGINING VERMONT?

Editor, *Vermont Commons*:

Several months ago, the Vermont Council on the Future of Vermont released its report, "Imagining Vermont: Values and Vision for the Future."

The report culminated an 18-month, \$400,000 process, during which some 4,000 Vermonters attended over 100 meetings. Aably written and attractively produced, the report collected and transmitted the ideas and dreams of its participants of the possible Vermont of the future.

It's not easy to fairly summarize the findings, but here's an attempt. The Council members heard Vermonters say that, by and large, they wanted a future Vermont with a working landscape, vigorous small industry, renewable energy, public transportation, creative arts, human scale, shared cultural values, affordable housing, excellent education and health care, more secure jobs and higher incomes, a renewed sense of community, and, of course, intensified government planning to bring about the desired results.

Whenever a panel of citizens goes forth to hear the voice of the people, they are naturally more likely to hear voices that express their own vision and values. Thus, it's worth looking at the composition of the council, selected by the Vermont Council for Rural Development.

It was chaired by an upscale gentleman cattle breeder. Its 17 members included eight from government and nonprofit organizations, three from education, two from the news media, two retired bankers, one public utility official, and one entrepreneurial businessman (the founder of the Vermont Culinary Institute).

The striking thing about this group is the near-absence of anyone making a living in the competitive-enterprise sector. Its composition and set of values are reflected in the Council's conclusions.

The watchwords seem to be collective action, unity with diversity, civility, affordability, sustainability, creativity, and the public good. Nowhere is there any inclination to laud the bold, visionary, risk-taking entrepreneur – a James Hartness, Horace and Erastus Fairbanks, T.N. Vail, or (more recently) Rich Tarrant. Such people produce disruption, not harmony – but in doing so they create wealth, spur human progress, and, in Vermont, pay the lion's share of taxes.

The report recognizes that Vermont has high taxes and "what many have called an impossible business development environment." It acknowledges that Vermonters want to see improvement in the state's overgrown regulatory regimes. But having done so, the report sails off into the need for more (government) education, better health services, more participation, more diversity, and more socially progressive policies, such as "making the state a national model in order to slow or reverse climate change."

The Council shows no evidence of recognizing the fundamental importance of secure, predictable private property rights to economic growth and development, and that the more intensive planning it proposes cannot but further undermine that right.

The report celebrates Vermont "firsts" (no slavery, universal suffrage, the billboard law, civil unions), but it does not notice that Vermont's was the first constitution anywhere to declare that "whenever any person's property is taken for the use of the public, the owner ought to receive an equivalent in money" (Ch. I, Art. 2).

But perhaps the crowning omission in this report is the bald fact that state government, the great hoped-for wonder worker, is careering toward insolvency. At this rate, by 2030 essentially all of the projected revenue of all governments in Vermont (state, school districts, municipalities) will be required to pay only for public education and human services – and that assumes that Vermonters will agree to pay 18 percent of their adjusted gross incomes in taxes, an all-time high.

State government is now a year into a serious
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Vermont Commons is a print and online forum for exploring the idea of Vermont independence—political, economic, social, and spiritual. We are unaffiliated with any other organization or media, and interested in all points of view. We welcome your letters, thoughts, and participation.

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healthcare and economic justice, constructive international engagement, and a truly multicultural society. Aspects of Obama's presidency that most liberals sincerely welcome are the very causes of right-wing rebellion.

Southern and populist conservative decentralists are often (especially by the left) called "neoconfederates" – implying that they are inherently racist and might even bring back slavery if they could. Employing guilt by association, a few misguided critics of the Vermont independence movement have even suggested that we in the movement must therefore condone racism ourselves.

This ignores the huge cultural gulf that separates left and right decentralism. For instance, the Second Southern National Congress, which met a few weeks ago, proclaimed allegiance to a "Southern culture" which is "founded on the enduring and permanent: trust in God, family, tradition, manners, property, community, loyalty, courage, and honor." There is no explicit mention of race, though in the context of the South's history, liberals are correct to ask

What is the cost to democracy when the ascendance of one side so deeply disturbs and threatens the other that civil dialogue is no longer possible?

which "tradition" they mean. Besides the race question, such cultural nostalgia reflects a very different set of priorities from the agenda of social progress and equality, of human and civil rights, of nonviolence and multiculturalism, that motivates liberal decentralism.

So a critique of federal power, which leads some to advocate for greater state sovereignty or flirt with the gauntlet-throwing strategies of nullification or secession, does not imply a unified social or political vision. Those on the right are bothered by different manifestations of national governance than those on the left, even though on both sides, there is a recognition that culture, community, and liberty can be overwhelmed by this political juggernaut that controls the economy for the benefit of corporate elites, tells us what our children must learn, oversees hundreds of military bases around the globe, and alienates millions of citizens by its heavy handed actions.

A conundrum for the left

Liberal decentralists, unlike conservatives, have to face a paradox: It is by expanding its power that the federal government achieved what we consider to be social progress. The ending of slavery, child-labor legislation, food and drug safety laws, the New Deal, the Warren Court and civil rights laws, and environmental protection certainly improved life in America, in our view – but always at the cost of siphoning off local, state, and regional sovereignty. Most progressives would say that the achievements are worth this cost, that we can entrust government with this power because we can sometimes elect leaders who bring about greater justice, equality, and the other values important to us.

But what happens, we decentralists ask, when other sorts of leaders – Bush and Cheney, for example – are in charge? The damage they can do with the power at their disposal is appalling. And even with the more liberal party in control of Congress and the White House, how likely is it that progressive legislation, on the scale of the New Deal or Great Society, will emerge in today's poisonous and deeply divided political climate? What is the cost to democracy when the ascendance of one side so deeply disturbs and threatens the other that civil dialogue is no longer possible?

The U.S. Constitution was supposed to provide the means for transcending deep divisions in society. James Madison argued that a healthy political tension balances competing interests and factions. According to this view, the friction between left and right visions of democracy, while frustrating to partisans, results in more-or-less reasonable compromises that keep society relatively stable. Consequently, Madison and the other Federalists, like American leaders of later generations, sought to keep the United States together despite the abrasively divergent cultures of North and South. *Is that project still tenable now, given the imperial power of these United States?*

What would Madison – who only 11 years after the Constitutional Convention authored the "Virginia Resolution," complaining about the federal government's efforts to "enlarge its powers" – think about the national government today? It has so much authority over local cultures and communities that the stakes of national elections are now frighteningly high. The prolif-

eration of sovereignty and secession movements can be seen as a signal that neither the left nor the right can tolerate the imposition of the other's agenda by a distant government controlled by inaccessible and unaccountable elites.

The Constitution achieved compromise, in part, by tolerating the institution of slavery, a deal that abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison famously called "a covenant of death" and "an agreement with Hell." The federal government has not so much transcended social conflict as papered over deeply held but divergent values. The right's (and South's) agenda of imperialism, moralism, and rugged individualism has stymied liberals' pursuit of social and economic justice, and so the United States is the only industrialized nation without universal healthcare, the only "democracy" with capital punishment, and the only western power with so many of its citizens in prison.

Wouldn't an independent Vermont, or some confederation of progressive states, advance more quickly and become a model of enlightened governance? This is not to say that Vermont would completely embrace some wild left-wing radicalism, as there is a healthy streak of commonsense conservatism here, among decentralists also. But we would be able to experiment with social and economic policies in which local citizens and communities can participate.

Similarly, the progressive legislation that *has* managed to take hold in the U.S. since 1900 has failed to convert Southern culture or conservative populism to the version of social democracy we favor. Why not let the "red" regions of America live by the values they prefer, instead of driving them into a frenzied hatred of liberalism imposed from above?

Decentralism is based on the belief that people will act more rationally, more compassionately, more *democratically*, when they feel that their voices matter, that the system is responsive to their concerns. It is based on a commitment to nonviolence, a belief that dialogue and neighborly respect enable us to live in community together despite our differences.

These are Vermont's values. They are threatened or stifled by the arrogant power of a colossal national government. This is why we seek independence for Vermont. •

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Local, Diverse, And Equitable: Why Vermont's Future Needs Robust Bioenergy Capacity

Ralph Meima

Vermont's democracy and socio-economic welfare over the long run will depend substantially on whether energy supplies are local, diverse, and equitably distributed. Along with complementary measures – energy conservation, efficiency improvements, wind power, solar and geothermal energy – appropriate development of Vermont's bioenergy capacity (biomass, biogas, and liquid biofuels) is absolutely central for achieving this. There are indeed many bright spots across the state – reasons for hope – but hurdles remain, and it is going to take great political will, legislative success, and civic unity to make the changes necessary to bring Vermont's energy regime back into alignment with the viability of our democracy and the welfare of our citizens.

In our current circumstances, with almost all energy coming from international sources and made available through large-scale, centralized capital infrastructure (e.g., oil, gas, coal, nuclear, hydro), control of an essential factor in the life of our families and communities has migrated from the local and the transparent to the distant and opaque, and naturally become subject to abuses of power and manipulation for elite, private purposes. The Iraq War, mountain-top removal for coal extraction, violations of indigenous people's rights in large-scale hydro schemes, financial houses' gaming of oil futures markets, the buying of politicians and science by the oil companies, and continued operation of nuclear plants despite majority public opposition, are all examples of this. There would be no basis for such outrageous social and economic dysfunction if energy were largely local, diverse, and equitable.

The situation was not always thus. It is interesting to note that the constitutional, representative democracy that we struggle to maintain today emerged under circumstances in which large-scale, centralized energy and food systems had not yet



There are biofuels aplenty available in Vermont. Utility right-of-way clearing provides a source of woodchips for a growing market.

WILL LINDNER

Prior to industrialization, an average household member might produce and expend about 100 watts of energy in service to the homestead or farm. A draft animal might expend hundreds or even thousands of watts, depending on its size and strength. (For both humans and animals, the energy capacity depended on factors like health and nutrition.) The household's mechanical energy consumption, then, depended upon how many people or animals were working to sustain it.

Burning wood, dung, and other organic material boosted a household's energy access enormously. While combustion of these materials did not provide households with mechanical

a man working 10 hours a day for almost three months. Cutting, hauling, and stacking firewood is therefore well worth the effort! And it is easy to see how human access to chemical energy sources for combustion catapulted humans out of the energetics that the rest of the biosphere is constrained to live within.

But bioenergy is not what built our modern, technological society. Fossil and nuclear energy did that. A gallon of gasoline, as an example, weighs about 6 pounds but contains the energy equivalent of more than 50 days of human work. When you cruise in your car, you have the power output of several hundred human slaves working for you, depending on your engine type. And this output, combined with the higher EROEI (energy returned over energy invested) of fossil fuels – i.e., the energy you have to spend to make available the energy in a fossil fuel resource like an oil field or coal seam – has brought extraordinary energy intensities to support our way of life – energy that is many orders of magnitude more dense and more accessible than anything humans experienced for most of our history.

Like Tolkien's magical ring, fossil fuel energy has been an irresistible means of acquiring power, for individuals, companies, and nations. Public policy has pushed fossil and nuclear energy production to high economies of scale, and made energy deceptively cheap. Concentration of the ownership and control of such energy systems into few hands has linked energy to political influence and almost eliminated local accountability. More than a century of this process has led to significant erosion of democracy and welfare.

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Cruise in your car, and you have the power output of several hundred human slaves working for you. This output has brought extraordinary energy intensities to support our way of life.

been developed. But as scholars have pointed out, high standards of living around the world tend to correlate with high individual and household access to energy, and have throughout history.

Units of energy are convertible from one to another; i.e., chemical energy can become thermal energy (for example, through combustion), and this applies to kinetic and mechanical energy as well. This enables us to equate the energy produced and expended by human beings with other forms of energy, such as the energy it takes to power an electric bulb (which we now measure in watts).

energy, it provided thermal energy for space heating, food preservation, metalworking, cleaning, and much more – and the chemical energy in a relatively small quantity of wood was equivalent to the mechanical energy of several well-fed people.

For example, a pound of cured cordwood contains (with some variation) an average of about 7,000 BTUs, or around 2,000 Watt-hours – i.e., the energy equivalent of a person working at a moderate pace for 20 hours. A dry 40-pound log, dragged over to the campfire, added to a Stone Age household's energy budget the equivalent of

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budget crisis. Its revenues, especially the income tax, have tanked. In January legislators will face General Fund deficits totaling \$439 million for the four fiscal years 2010-2013. This is after federal stimulus receipts.

The state's two retirement funds are \$466 million out of actuarial soundness. The unfunded post-employment benefits (health insurance) promised to retired state employees and schoolteachers are an astonishing \$1.6 billion out of soundness.

How will taxpayers every pay this off? The state can't raise tax rates. Vermont already has one of the five highest tax burdens in the nation. Raising tax rates would guarantee a serious crippling of Vermont's productive economy.

The solution to this problem isn't at all obvious, at least if dishonorable bankruptcy is ruled out. But *Imagining Vermont* should at the least have put these sobering facts on the table and engaged its 4,000 participants in that discussion.

JOHN McCLAUGHRY
Kirby

A MORIBUND CONSTITUTION

Editor, Vermont Commons:

In [the Fall 2009 issue of *Vermont Commons*] Harold Thomas and Kirkpatrick Sale reported on the efforts of several states to nullify federal mandates by legal challenges to the broad grant of powers that the federal government pretends

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within the U.S. Empire, given the new century's emerging realities: climate change, global peak oil, and an "endless war on terror" for "full-spectrum dominance" being waged by the U.S. government for geo-strategic control of the world's remaining fossil fuel energy resources.

We believe that a 21st-century Vermont, working in concert with other states and nations, may better be able to see to the needs of its citizens as an independent republic than as one of fifty states within the U.S. Empire.

Our vision for 2010 and beyond is to remain in statewide print publication six times per year, and to continue our efforts to pioneer a new and sustainable model for 21st century independent multimedia journalism.

Elements of our emerging model include

- 1. Our Not-For-Profit Approach:** We see our news journal as a nonprofit "statewide multimedia coffeehouse," not a commercially run for-profit business.
- 2. Our Place-Based "Commons" Focus:** We are focused on the goings-on of a single place

to perceive in the ambiguous "general Welfare" and "Commerce" clauses of the U.S. Constitution (Article I, Section 8)

Constitutional scholars have long argued, long and hard, whether Social Security, aid to education and No Child Left Behind, aid to housing, research grants, labor standards, federal highways, farms subsidies, business loan guarantees, the space program, airport subsidies, the nuclear energy program, and now the economic stimulus package and national healthcare, etc., are constitutional under these clauses.

Although the legal arguments will continue forever, no firm conclusion can be reached because – pardon my French – the U.S. Constitution is a pile of crap. When adopted in 1787, it was a stunning document, far ahead of its times, drafted by what were then the most enlightened political minds. But it did not anticipate the complicated issues we face today, and it is now a quaint, outdated museum piece, kept on life support by frequent, imaginative reinterpretations. If you want to find out whether No Child Left Behind or the nuclear energy program are constitutional, you might as well read tea leaves.

For an example of a modern constitution, dealing with current issues, take a look at the Constitution of the Swiss Federation. With 197 Articles (the U.S. Constitution has only seven) expressed in short and precise sentences, this document has all the charm of a railroad timetable, but it is encyclopedic and unambiguous. Social Security and health

– Vermont – and its relationship with the rest of the world, with a specific focus on breathing life back into idea of "the Commons."

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We have much good work ahead of us.
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Long live the UNTied States.

ROB WILLIAMS
Editor/Publisher

care? Guaranteed (Art. 41). Control of schools and their curriculum? Responsibility of cantons (Art.62). National highways? Railroads, air travel, space travel? Renewable energy? Nuclear energy? Electric power grid? Responsibility of Feds (Arts. 83, 87, 89, 90, 91). Human cloning? Federal deficits? Forbidden (Arts. 119, 126). Federal tax rate? Maximum rate of 11.5 percent, to be collected by cantons and then forwarded to Feds, minus a collection fee of 17 percent (Art. 128). Etc., etc.

Will we ever reform our Constitution in such a rational and up-to-date manner?

As likely as water running uphill. The old fogies on our Supreme Court love to fiddle with constitutional arguments, and the sleazy members of our Congress love the ambiguities in our outdated, creaky Constitution, which they can exploit to their own advantage. And let's not forget the hordes of shyster lawyers who make their fame and fortune arguing the cases.

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Vermont Vox Populi: "If You Don't Go Out And Try To Change Things...An Interview with Charlotte Dennett" *Kayleigh Blanchette*

Charlotte Dennett, an attorney and former investigative journalist who lives in Cambridge, Vermont, was the Vermont Progressive Party's candidate State Attorney General in 2008. In that race she gained national attention for her campaign pledge to bring murder charges against then-President George Bush if elected. She is an activist in labor, women's, and environmental causes, and has served on the board of the Vermont AFL-CIO. Since the election, she has completed a book titled *The People v. Bush*. This interview was conducted for Vermont Commons by Kayleigh Blanchette.

Why did you choose to write *The People v. Bush*?

Charlotte Dennett: I thought that if I write this book, I could get out there and talk to more people. Maybe even create enough groundswell so that somebody else could take on the prosecution of George W. Bush for murder. At first I thought I'd write an article. Then when I started writing, I realized I had a lot more to say. Also, in the course of the campaign, I got a huge amount of support outside of Vermont. That's when I realized that this was very much of a national issue. It had tapped into this call for accountability and into a very deep-seated sentiment among everyday Americans that this government had gone way too far in its ambitions abroad and in the repression of people at home. Some people feel like they're above the law. Nobody is above the law, not even the president of the United States when he leaves office. Those were some of the reasons why I decided to write a book.

So tell our readers more about Vince Bugliosi. Who is he and how has he helped you over the past year?

CD: Vincent Bugliosi is a world-famous prosecutor. Most people know him for his book *Helter Skelter*, the biggest-selling true-crime book in history. He has written many books. One day, a friend put Bugliosi's *The Prosecution of George W. Bush for Murder* in my hands. When I got to the section in the book that says "any attorney general or any district attorney can carry on this prosecution, even in your local state," I realized why my friend gave me the book. She knew I was running for attorney general.

When another friend came up to visit me and said she knew how to get a hold of Bugliosi, I saw a lot of coincidences lining up. I got his phone number in two minutes and in five I was on the phone with him. We started talking, and I told him I was running for attorney general and that I wanted to make the prosecution of Bush a campaign issue. He said he was flying east in a week for a big conference, called Planning for the Prosecution of High Level American War

Criminals, and that he was invited to speak. And so I met him. We got to talking at dinner and I asked if he'd come up to Vermont and be with me when I announced my campaign. And he agreed to; he canceled all of his speaking arrangements and came up.

Generous of him. How is your book different from Vince Bugliosi's *The Prosecution of George W. Bush for Murder*?

CD: The book is different because his book is completely focused on the prosecution. My book, while it repeats some of his points, which it must do because we raised them during the campaign, is more like a memoir, at least for the first part of the book. I talk about the issues that came up during my campaign, how people reacted to it, and what lessons I got from it. The second part of the book, however, is when I start to look into other groups and individuals and what they've been doing to hold the president and high government officials accountable. I interviewed people, peace movements, lawyers, veterans, and others who had somehow been impacted by this illegal war in Iraq.

The other thing that makes it different is that I go beyond the issue of murder and explore the issue of torture. I think it was a little easier for people to conceptualize holding him and other high govern-

Nobody is above the law, not even the president of the United States when he leaves office.

ment officials accountable for torture. In the end, I actually learned a way of integrating the torture crime into the major prosecution for murder.

So with the big January 2010 release of your book, what are you doing in the coming months to prepare?

CD: The first thing I have to do is set up my website. I have to do Facebook, network with people, put out an announcement for the book, and then send out press releases. Then I want to get feedback, because I'm sure I just touched the surface in terms of the people I interviewed that are a part of the accountability movement. There isn't a week that goes by that I don't find out some other story about another group of Americans that are doing something. I'm going to be putting pictures from a lot of these events on my website because the mainstream media are just not covering this protest. And because I want people to go to my website and understand that this is a national movement. I think overall, if there's one thing I know very well, it's that once you finish your book, your job is only halfway done.

Shifting gears for a moment: What made you take the risk of running for Vermont's attorney general last year?



Charlotte Dennett, author of *The People v. Bush*. CHARLOTTE DENNETT

CD: I was risking to a certain degree my professional reputation as a lawyer by adding the issue of prosecuting Bush for murder to my campaign. There's a certain danger in doing this. I knew that it was an edgy subject and I could've been dismissed as a crazy person. The one thing that gave me confidence was Vincent Bugliosi and his arguments. I read them over carefully and there's some legitimacy to what he says. I mean, something has to be done.

While running on the Progressive ticket for attorney general, what obstacles made you tentative about the position?

CD: I was working on another book at the time; in fact, I'd been working on this book for years. It was a book based largely on my father, who was a top intelligence agent, and the investigation into his death. I felt like I could really tell an amazing story, but I had a lot of difficulty finding a publisher. I was very committed to this book and running for attorney general would have meant putting my book on the back burner at a time when I thought I was really close to getting it published. Also, my husband was soon to leave his job as the president of the National Writers Union, so there were financial issues to be taken into consideration. There was just a lot of uncertainty in our lives at that time.

Given that uncertainty, do you think that you appreciate politics more now that you've run for office?

CD: Yes. Personally speaking, I really enjoyed running for office. It reinforced in me the belief that American people take you seriously when you run for office. You can wail about how unjust things are, but if you don't go out and try to change things, then no one will take you seriously. Even

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The Greenneck: When The Doing Is Its Own Reward

He spent the weekend killing pigs. Well, not the *whole* weekend; after all, it's not the killing – the soft pull of the trigger, the quick probing with blade to loose the lifeblood whilst the heart still beats – that eats time. It's the aftermath. This year they decided to scald and scrape, a technique chosen for the preservation of the skin, allowing for the production of enormous dry-cured hams that were salted and chilled, before being hung in the basement, to be eaten a year hence. No immediate gratification, here, although there's an undeniable pleasure in the mere sight of those gigantic joints of meat swinging from the floor joists like primal punching bags.

To be honest, he sorta fucked it up. It took nearly five hours to scald and scrape the first pig, which is approximately four hours more than it should have taken. It was cold, and raining, and every time he dipped the pig into the cauldron, the water over-flowed and extinguished the already barely adequate fire. Oy. Even with the "Handful of Hair" weekend on 107.1 Frank FM, he couldn't quite pull himself out of the funk of standing in the bitter October rain with a 400-pound pig dangling before him, even in death obstinately refusing to part with its bristles. They finished at 5:00, cold and sore, and by 8:00 were asleep with the boys.

Pig number two, granted a day's reprieve for the delays of the day prior, went much better. Bang, slice, dip, scrape, dip, scrape, dress, halve. From pen to hanging, denuded and sawed down the middle, in perhaps two hours. No world record, but a considerable improvement over day before. The sun was out, the Scorpions were rocking like a hurricane from that tinny tractor radio, and he felt almost competent. Sleep came early again, but it wasn't the

discouraged sleep of trying to escape the day's hardships; it was the bone-tired sleep of deep contentment.

He's noted it before, but it bears repeating: He sometimes struggles to explain why he does what he does. Why scald a pig when it's so much easier to skin it? Why not hire someone else to slaughter the pigs? Why raise pigs at all? He could follow that thread through so many of the activities comprising his

waking hours: the firewood, the gardens, the cows. Almost everything he does could be done more expediently and all too often better, by someone else. Almost everything he does defies the conventional wisdom that time is money, and should therefore be accorded such respect.

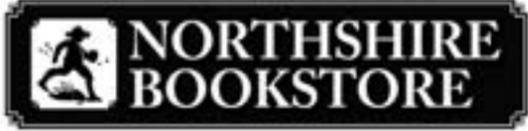
But then he thinks: What if money should not command such respect? What if, in fact, the time spent scraping the hair off the hide of a pig is its own reward? What if discovering it is within himself to do this thing is worth exactly whatever it takes, even if whatever it takes is five hours on a raw October afternoon that could have been avoided by handing

a quick 50 bucks to the neighborhood slaughterman?

He believes, fervently and unapologetically, that our culture is this sorry crossroads largely because we have forgotten that time and money are not interchangeable. That money is not competence itself, but the means to buy that competence from another person. It might feel rewarding, even powerful, to do this. But it is a reward as flimsy and impermanent as the paper bills it's made from.

He slips down to the basement to view the hams. It will be twelve long months before they are ready to eat. But already, it feels as if they've fed him. •

What if discovering it is within himself to do this thing is worth exactly whatever it takes, even if whatever it takes is five hours on a raw October afternoon?



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Localvore Living: Local Bread Breakthrough For This Fall's "Localvore Challenge" *Robin McDermott*

Those who have been following the Localvore Challenge for a few years will know that bread made from local flour has always been one of the biggest "challenges" for Localvores. In 2006 and 2007, Randy George, owner of Middlesex, Vermont's Red Hen Baking Company, produced special "Localvore Loaves" using whole wheat from Vermont. Each loaf came with a full-page disclaimer about why the bread didn't meet normal Red Hen standards. In the disclaimer, George explained that he hoped someday he would be able to make a bread using all-local wheat flour that he would be proud to sell alongside any of his other loaves. Most Localvores thought the bread was pretty good, but Randy didn't feel right putting the Red Hen name on it without his specific disclaimer.

Over the course of the past three years, much has been learned about growing and harvesting wheat in our fickle climate.

In 2008, Localvores were thrilled to learn that Red Hen had started sourcing some of its flour from a mill in southern Quebec (within the self-imposed 100-mile radius of the Mad River Valley that is considered "local" during the Localvore Challenge). While the Localvore Loaves that year were not totally local, they were getting closer to the all-local bread that George dreamed of baking some day.

Spurred on by the Localvores' enthusiasm for an all-local bread, George teamed up with Charlotte, Vermont, farmer Tom Kenyon of Aurora Farm in 2007 to begin experimentation on growing wheat

that would produce flour suitable for local bread baking. At the same time, Heather Darby of the University of Vermont began working with other Vermont grain producers including Ben Gleason of Gleason Grains and Jack Lazor of Butterworks Farm, on parallel projects. Darby's work has included fact-finding trips (with Vermont farmers accompanying her) to the western grain-growing regions of the U.S. to learn about different varieties that might produce better results in Vermont. Interestingly, it was discovered that many of the varieties with the greatest likelihood of success in Vermont were originally developed right here in the Green Mountain State in the 1800s by Dr. Cyrus Guernsey Pringle (1838-1911), a renowned botanist and wheat breeder.

The first two years that Kenyon planted wheat for Red Hen yielded disappointing results; George says the crops for those years were turned into cattle feed. But over the course of the past three years much has been learned about growing and harvesting wheat in our fickle climate. A major change in harvesting the wheat was tried this year for the first time. While one thinks of "amber waves of grain" growing for miles and miles in the western prairies, it turns out that allowing the grain to dry in the fields was creating sprout damage that was a major contributor to undesirable qualities in Vermont wheat not present in western wheat. Vermont farmers learned from their colleagues just over the border in Quebec that the wheat should be harvested in early July when it is still a little green, before the wheat has a chance to sprout in the fields.

This year, Aurora Farm's hard red winter wheat, planted last fall, was harvested in early July. However, it needed to dry for about a month before it could be tested to determine if it was worth trying to mill. The initial tests in August were promising and on September 1, 2009, ten years to the day that Red Hen Baking Company



Vermont botanist and wheat breeder Dr. Cyrus Guernsey Pringle.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT.

sold its first loaf of bread, Champlain Valley Mills of Westport, N.Y., milled 3,000 pounds of flour from Kenyon's farm for Red Hen Baking Company. George was eager to try the new flour, hoping he might be able to use a percentage of it in some of his breads in the coming year. But the results of the newly milled flour surprised even George who said, "Imagine my surprise when I combined this flour with water, yeast and salt in the mixing bowl and found that it made a familiar-feeling dough! The resulting bread, although not perfect, was surprisingly good. A week later we are making bread that is beyond my wildest dreams of what we could do with an indigenous Vermont [flour]."

Kenyon planted 30 acres of wheat this year, which should yield about 60,000 pounds of flour. Next year he plans to plant 90 acres, and has more land available for future expansion. The amount of flour produced this year is an ample quantity to produce a total Localvore loaf year-round that George will be proud to put into a Red Hen bread bag. In addition, he plans to include some of the local flour in other Red Hen loaves as well.

The new all-local bread will be made of completely local flour, although it will take Red Hen a few weeks to work out the exact "recipe" for the new loaf. George says that Kenyon's flour will be combined with a small amount of whole wheat from another Vermont grain farmer. "The addition of some whole wheat from our long-time supplier and friend Ben Gleason of Bridport will add to the Vermont pedigree and gives this bread a depth of flavor."

He also knows the name of the new loaf: Cyrus Pringle —From Vermont. •

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Vermont Vox Populi, continued from page 7

if you are a long-shot candidate or a third-party candidate, I found that people were very respectful. I'd say, in terms of how the media handled all of us, at least at the outset, we all got a fair shot. I liked the experience very much and I think that more people have to do it. You have to look at power in this country and come to realize that if there aren't more of us standing up to the status quo, there will only be one idea. If you don't act on your beliefs they'll just run roughshod right over you, so there's got to be many different levels

I care very deeply about the death and destruction we've caused in the Middle East. I lived part of my life there, so I feel like I have to do something to address the great injustice that is being done.

of resistance and running for office is one of the ways you can do that. More working-class people, women, union people, minorities, and people whose interests aren't being sufficiently represented have to seriously think about running for office. We came so perilously close to losing our democracy under the Bush administration, so we cannot sit back and rest.

After running for Vermont's attorney general, you continued to fight for the accountability movement.

What is the accountability movement, and what is a recent accomplishment or goal that you have for the group?

CD: The accountability movement begins with insisting that our leaders abide by the rule of the law, that they follow the Constitution, that they don't write secret memos, that they honor our democracy, and that they do it by ensuring transparency. The accountability movement is rooted in democracy and it's a people's movement. It mostly grew out of the abuses of the Bush Administration, but its ideals can extend to town select boards. The whole idea is to change Americans from being passive to getting them to be more informed, aware, and on top of what our leaders are doing. You need to start to really analyze where people's votes are coming from. That's my wish: that the movement will spread from holding the Bush people accountable to holding everybody accountable. We need to come forward and do something about this.

Tell us more. Why do you care about this issue?

CD: Democracy is deeply ingrained in my family. In my particular case, my grandfather was a great believer in free speech. He cherished that right. Then, in the course of writing the book about my father, I found out that he cared deeply about this issue. In fact he was so outspoken [it] may have gotten him in trouble. My care for the accountability movement comes from taking very seriously as a kid that we lived in the greatest country in the

world and democracy was what made it great. I'm not going to say we live in the greatest country in the world, but we certainly live in a great one, where so many people come in hopes of having some degree of freedom in their life. Under the Bush Administration we were losing our freedom.

Also, as a result of traveling, I care very deeply about the death and destruction that we've caused in the Middle East. I was born and lived part of my life there, so I feel like I have to do something to address the great injustice that is being done.

We came perilously close to losing our democracy under the Bush administration, so we cannot sit back and rest.

What was your proudest moment during the election, or since discovering the accountability movement?

CD: My top three favorite moments: Number one, the press conference with Bugliosi, when I announced my candidacy. That was a proud moment because I knew we were doing something that in many ways was a sheer act of faith, but damn, we were going to do it. Here I was sitting next to one of the best prosecutors in the country and he came to support me in my effort.

Number two was debating on Vermont Public Radio, because I knew that I was able to hold my own at that debate. Many people called in after-

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The National Healthcare “Debate”: *Greed, Fear of Death, and a Vermont Alternative?*

Thomas H. Naylor

Claims that the U.S. healthcare system is broken are by no means exaggerated. The United States has far and away the most expensive healthcare delivery system in the world. Our Empire spends more than \$2 trillion annually on healthcare, averaging more than \$6,300 per person. Spiraling increases in the cost of health insurance impose an almost unbearable burden on employers and employees alike, as well as state and local governments. The possibility of the American healthcare system bankrupting the U.S. economy cannot be ruled out.

When human greed exploits the fear of death, there is no limit as to how high healthcare prices can rise.

But contrary to what we have been told by President Barack Obama, Senator Bernie Sanders, and other big-government-spending politicians, there is no national fix to the United States' healthcare problems.

First Lady Hillary Clinton inadvertently discovered this the hard way back in 1994 with her abortive attempt to sell Congress on a national healthcare system. She demonstrated conclusively that such a system was not politically feasible. Unfortunately, she did not appreciate the fact that a national healthcare system for 320 million people was beyond the scope of human possibility. Stated alternatively, no one knows how to design such a complex system.

The fundamental problem underlying the United States healthcare system is neither an economic nor a political problem, but rather a philosophical problem. In short, the U.S. healthcare system rests perilously on two principles: fear of death and greed.

The *demand* for healthcare services in the United States is driven by our inordinate fear of death. We neither know when to die nor how to die, and few physicians are very helpful to us in dealing with these questions. The *supply* of healthcare services, on the other hand, is driven by the greed of providers, hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, and health insurance companies. When human greed exploits the fear of death, there is no limit as to how high healthcare prices can rise. For those who are fortunate enough to have good health insurance, the message is, “You deserve the best medical care money can buy, because you are entitled to live forever.” So say physicians and pharmaceutical company television advertisements.

Those with good health insurance have access to a plethora of very expensive, high-tech medical services, including magnetic resonance imaging, ultrasound, nuclear diagnostics, complex multi-organ transplants, coronary-bypass surgery,

artificial kidney machines, death-defying prenatal procedures, genetic enhancements, and gene splicing. Anti-aging clinics offer everything from yoga, meditation, and mind-body medicine to growth hormones, sex hormones, melatonin, herbs, potions and elixirs to delay the aging process. But to little avail. Joel Garreau's book, *Radical Evolution*, reports on a new breed of scientists who believe that advances in genetics, robotics, information technology, and nanotechnology will allow us to improve our intelligence, reinvent our bodies, and even become immortal. This new field of medicine is known as transhumanism.

There are dozens of drugs and high-tech medical devices and procedures claiming to prolong life. We have become accustomed to an endless series of announcements on the evening television news reporting major breakthroughs in the cure of this ailment or that, only to be followed by a retraction six months later warning of risky side effects or questions on the efficacy of the drug or procedure.

By widening the boundaries of illness and lowering the threshold for treatment, pharmaceutical companies have created millions of new patients and billions of dollars in profits. By exploiting our fear of disease and death, pharmaceutical companies have redefined mild problems and common complaints to serious illness and medical conditions requiring drug treatments.

So strong is the fear of death that it's not unusual for the wealthy who are terminally ill to spend their last months either on the Internet or flying from one medical center to another in search of a physician, a medical school, an unproven drug or medical procedure, or a high-tech silver bullet that will forestall the grim reaper for a few more months. The problem is that the number of options available to the terminally ill patient is often completely overwhelming. How does one cope with so many alternatives? Is this any way to live or die? Vermont writer Garret Keizer refers to this phenomenon as “physician-assisted eternal life: the desire of the old to avoid death at any cost, especially if the cost can be passed on to another generation.” But at the lower end of the income level, it's quite a different story.

I've got mine

The problem with national health insurance is what I call the “I've got mine, Jack” syndrome. Elderly patients who have paid their monthly premiums feel they are entitled to the best healthcare money can buy. They never think about the effect that a \$100,000 hospital stay will have on other people's premiums. It's all about looking out for number one. Indeed, it's not uncommon for a senior citizen to boast after receiving notice of a large hospital bill paid by Medicare, “I'm really getting my money's worth.” No wonder Medicare is almost broke.

To promote its cause the Alzheimer's Association

recently issued a press release with the provocative headline, “10 Million U.S. Baby Boomers Will Develop Alzheimer's Disease.” Virtually all of the attention bestowed on AD by the medical profession, academic researchers, and the National Institutes of Health treats this situation as though it were purely a medical problem: All we need do to cure AD is identify the gene causing the problem and then find a chemical compound to allay the effects of the troublemaking gene. Apparently it has never occurred to anyone that AD may simply be the body's way of protecting those whose lives have become meaningless from the despair associated with prolonged life. AD may, in fact, be a way of taking them out of their misery. Not only may there be no cure for AD, but even if there were a cure, what would be the psychological, social, and moral consequences of administering it?

Notwithstanding the predominance of Christianity in the United States, with its adherence to the belief in life after death, our culture promotes a Darwinian, survival-of-the-fittest attitude with regard to the extremes to which we are prepared to go to prolong our own individual lives. It matters not how much of society's scarce

By exploiting our fear of disease and death, pharmaceutical companies have redefined common complaints to serious illness and medical conditions requiring drug treatments.

healthcare resources are consumed by prolonging my life for a few more months or years. I am the center of the universe. The rest of the world be damned!

Regardless whether a national healthcare system is publicly financed or privately financed, if it is driven by the confluence of greed and the denial of death it will be unstable and financially unfeasible. Any healthcare system that does not confront the moral, ethical, economic, and political implications of fear of death and greed represents an exercise in utter futility.

Healthcare within a community context

President Barack Obama's healthcare reform program is already showing signs of coming unraveled. Not only is it too big, too complex, and too high-tech, but it tries to be all things to all people. My guess is that the final result will be a significantly watered down version of the original proposal, if it survives at all.

For any healthcare system to stand a chance of working it must be highly decentralized so that

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Transition Times: Building a Transition Toolkit *Carl Etnier*

Ever plan 24 weddings in eight weeks? According to an event-planner friend of Barbarina Heyerdahl, that's the scope of what Heyerdahl took on in putting together the "Transition Toolkit," an eight-week extravaganza of lectures, films, and workshops around Transition. The Toolkit is sponsored by Shelburne Farms, Burlington Permaculture, and the Transition movements in Shelburne and Charlotte. It began October 1 and runs through November 21, with most events at Shelburne Farms.

Heyerdahl, one of the steering committee members for Transition Shelburne, explains that the series is designed to get people interested in Transition, no matter how they like to learn. Each week is focused around a theme. A Thursday evening lecture introduces the theme to those who learn well from listening to and talking with experts. A Friday-night film gives another take on the theme, for those who prefer to ingest their learning with popcorn and a soundtrack. And Saturday offers a workshop that gets participants using their hands.

For example, I helped Barbarina teach the introductory lecture ("Sobering Realities, Exciting Possibilities"), on climate change, peak oil, an overview of Transition Towns, and policy responses at different levels. The Friday movie was *Home*, released for Earth Day 2009, which contains aerial footage from more than 50 countries and is intended to inspire viewers to show active love for the planet they call home. *Radical Simplicity* author Jim Merkel taught Saturday's workshop participants to calculate their carbon footprint and compare it with what is a fair share for the world's population.

While the carbon-footprint calculations might leave pencil lead under

participants' fingernails, other workshops promise actual dirt. Topics include composting, using rain barrels, and hands-on permaculture design.

Another Transition Toolkit organizer, Chris Hurd, exemplifies the sort of person that the Transition Town movement can inspire. He first heard about Transition Towns in the Burlington airport about 2 a.m. He was there at the unusual time because technology had hit limits imposed by nature: the plane he was waiting for had hit a flock of geese and turned back. He met Paul Cate, a member of Transition Town Montpelier, who was waiting for the same flight. Cate told Hurd about the *Transition Handbook*, and by the time the flight arrived Hurd understood that the book would speak to him.

The *Handbook* left Hurd feeling overwhelmed, but he drew inspiration from his first meeting of Transition Shelburne. There, he says, "I felt this energy and synergy, and the diversity of voices and background and skills gave me great optimism."

He's now part of Transition Shelburne's steering committee, and helps with logistics for the Toolkit series. A realtor by trade, Hurd has become the eighth realtor in Vermont to earn the "Green" professional designation sponsored by the National Association of Realtors. He now urges potential buyers to think about not only the house and property, but also the whole community in which they'll live—both the people who live there and its resilience.

In addition to the Transition Toolkit series, Transition Shelburne is working on mapping community assets, setting up an energy committee, and reviewing the literature to find the best practices for communities to use in reducing their carbon footprint. The Toolkit series, they hope, will help identify new participants for these projects. •

The Toolkit series is designed to get people interested in Transition, no matter how they like to learn. It runs through November 21, with most events at Shelburne Farms.

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Abolish Usury, continued from page 1

In our own day, when usurious credit in the form of private finance capital remains the dominant force in economic life, and is largely taken for granted even by educated people, the alternative Kellogg offers is more important than ever. Indeed, I suggest that Kellogg's theory of money is the best monetary alternative we have to the baleful system under which we suffer.

Readers of *Vermont Commons* may wonder how Vermont can abolish usury, why it's important to do so, and how a "decentralized but nationally regulated monetary system" could function in Vermont -- either the independent, sovereign Vermont envisioned by secessionists, or the actual Vermont of today, subject to a largely unaccountable and corrupt federal government. I will return to the role of Vermont in the last part of this essay. Meanwhile, I offer a summary and updating of Kellogg's work, including an exploration of some of its important aspects and implications. Before we can consider the abolition of usury, we need to understand what it is and what it is not, and we need to understand money.

Edward Kellogg (1790-1858) was a New York City businessman whose losses in the crash of 1837 led him to examine the business cycle, monetary policy, and debt. In a series of writings, Kellogg developed the idea of redistributing capital not by taking from the rich through taxes and other direct appropriations, but by having the government provide very-low-interest loans to the general public. These loans would have a uniform, fixed

interest rate, established by law. They would be issued locally through a system of public credit banks he called the Safety Fund. Once issued, these low-interest loan notes would circulate as currency, replacing the privately issued banking notes of his day (which today take the form of Federal Reserve Notes). Although Kellogg wrote newspaper articles and essays in Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*

available to most of us only by borrowing at varying rates of interest from private creditors, and since creditors are free to charge whatever rates the market will bear, they are in a strong position to command a premium or tribute for their loans in the form of interest. Through payment of this tribute, populists pointed out, wealth is steadily concentrated in the hands of creditors. Kellogg

**Kellogg's public currency was intended to end the monopoly over
the discretionary issuance of money at interest, held then (and now)
by the private banking and investment system.**

and elsewhere,¹ and published a book in 1849 entitled *Labor and Other Capital*, his views are perhaps most fully developed in his posthumous work, *A New Monetary System*, published in 1861, edited by his daughter, Mary Kellogg Putnam.

In his day Kellogg seems to have influenced even Abraham Lincoln who, according to historian Mark A. Lause, ". . . had his own copy of Kellogg's book, *Labor and Capital* [sic] advocating the government issuance of paper currency as a just means of redistributing wealth, and he corresponded with the author's son-in-law."² Kellogg's public currency was intended to end the monopoly over the discretionary issuance of money at interest, which was held then (and now) by the private banking and investment system. Since capital is

aimed to replace what he called private "usurious" money with public, low-interest money, allowing the general public access to capital on what he believed to be non-usurious terms.

Kellogg proposed to establish local public credit banks, and we might imagine one in each community. These local public credit banks would be part of the Safety Fund. Instead of money being issued (as it is now) through a privatized and centralized money-management system on a top-down basis, primarily as loans at increasing rates of interest from a central bank to major commercial banks, and then to regional and local banks, and then to the public, money in his system would be issued by local federal banks as loans directly to citizens at nominal interest

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**"If we don't have it,
you don't need it."**

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Free Vermont Media: Thomas Greco's "The End of Money and the Future of Civilization" A Book Review by Richard C. Cook

It's too late for anyone to pretend that the U.S. government, whether under President Barack Obama or anyone else, can divert our nation from long-term economic decline. The U.S. is increasingly in a state of political, economic, and moral paralysis, caught as it were between the "rock" of protracted recession and the "hard place" of terminal government debt.

Even if the stock market can be shored up by more government borrowing for "stimulus" spending, it's a temporary reprieve, because nothing can bring back the consumer purchasing power that was lost when the banks stopped pumping money into the economy through out-of-control mortgage lending. We simply no longer have the job base for people to earn the income they need to live.

The underlying cause of the crisis is in fact the debt-based monetary system, whereby the U.S. ruling class long ago sold out our nation and its people to the international banking cartel of which the Rockefeller and Morgan interests have been the chief representatives for over a century. It was lending on a previously unheard of scale for overpriced assets to people and businesses unable to repay that created the bubbles that burst in 2008, not only in the housing market but also in such areas as commercial real estate, equities, commodities, and derivatives. It was an explosion that reverberated throughout the world.

Make no mistake. It's the banking system, facilitate by the Fed, not unwary borrowers, that brought on the collapse of 2008.

The Obama administration's response to the crisis has been to print Treasury bonds both for the financial system bailouts and the sputtering Keynesian stimulus that so far has gone substantially into military infrastructure. This bond bubble is what I have referred to as "Obama's Last Picture Show."

Government debt is fundamentally inflationary. For a generation, the U.S. dollar has been inflating at an increasing rate, with the economy being kept in a growth posture by selling our debt instruments abroad or allowing foreigners holding dollars to purchase property and other assets on our own soil. The website EconomyinCrisis.org reports that in 2007, the most recent year for which data are available, "foreign entities spent \$267.8 billion to acquire or establish U.S. businesses."

Foreigners are spending their dollars as fast as possible, because they are now plummeting in value. It's increasingly clear that sooner rather than later, the dollar will be dumped by foreign purchasers of bonds, particularly China, and possibly even the oil-producing nations.



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These nations know full well that bonds denominated in dollars can never be completely repaid, even if the bonds can be rolled over into fresh debt. It's this dynamic that is dragging the U.S. economy to the cliff, because real economic growth stopped long ago when our manufacturing jobs were exported. This is because most of the growth since Ronald Reagan was elected president in 1980 has been only on paper through financial bubbles. This included the dot.com bubble of the Clinton years that blew up in 2000-2001.

Now, after the Treasury bond bubble of 2009, there is nothing left in America to inflate. With so many jobs gone, the American family home was the last thing of value we owned.

So the air is going out of the tires. Americans who are struggling to work for a living are passive spectators as their jobs, savings, health insurance, pensions, and homes continue to erode in value or even disappear. Last Sunday the *Washington Post* reported a massive crisis in state and local government pensions. Reporter David Cho wrote, "The financial crisis has blown a hole in the rosy forecasts of pension funds that cover teachers, police officers and other government employees, casting into doubt as never before whether these public systems will be able to keep their promises to future generations of retirees."

So what, if anything, can be done about it?

Well, the first thing an intelligent physician does is diagnose the disease. Thomas Greco, in his new book *The End of Money and the Future of Civilization* (Chelsea Green: 2009), outlines the increasingly familiar story of how things got so bad, and he tells it as well as anyone has ever done. His style is precise and sometimes academic. Behind it, though, is a passion for truth and the type of rock-solid integrity that refuses to sugar-coat a very bitter pill.

More than that, Greco writes about how to change what has gone wrong. His credentials as an engineer, college professor, author, and consultant are impeccable. His book is among the most important written in this decade. It is truly a book

that can alter the world and, if taken seriously, give large numbers of people a practical way to survive the gathering catastrophe.

But unlike most commentators, what Greco offers is not another phony prescription for what the financiers and government should do for us, whether through "restarting" lending or another round of stimulus spending. Rather it's what we should do for ourselves, and could do much better, if we understood what to do and if big banking and big government just got out of the way.

As I said, at the root is the monetary system, whose failure cannot be understood without a history lesson. So Greco writes about the struggle between banking and democracy that took place in the 1790s when the ink on our new national constitution was barely dry.

It was Alexander Hamilton, the first secretary of the treasury, who compromised the new nation, through what he admitted was "corruption," by giving the wealthy speculators in Revolutionary War bonds the benefit of federally-sponsored redemption and then by establishing the First Bank of the United States. This early drift toward elitist rule was opposed by Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and others who figured in the creation of what later became the Democratic Party.

Greco writes: "While Jefferson favored a stronger union than that which emerged under the Articles of Confederation, he was vehemently opposed to the reconstruction of monarchic government on the American continent." Hamilton had said frankly that the British monarchy was the best system of government known to man. Part of the monarchic system was the Bank of England, which Hamilton copied when setting up the First Bank.

But Jefferson, who repudiated Hamilton's elitist platform, was elected president in what was then called "The Revolution of 1800." Congress refused to renew the Bank's charter by a single vote when it was up for renewal in 1811.

But the Second Bank of the United States was chartered in 1816 due to the government debt left behind from the War of 1812 against Great Britain. Thus was set up what became known as the "Bank War."

It was President Andrew Jackson who dethroned the bankers from power by pulling government funds out of the Second Bank in 1833. Greco writes that in Jackson's view: "The 'Bank War' was a contest for rulership—would the United States be governed by the people through their elected president and representatives, or by an unelected financial elite through their central bank instrument?"

The modern takeover began in earnest during the Civil War when Congress passed the National Banking Acts in 1863-64 which mandated use of government bonds as bank lending reserves, thereby creating a direct linkage between bank profits and the debt the government was starting to load on the shoulders of taxpayers.

The nation's fate was sealed with the passage
continued on following page

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of the Federal Reserve Act in 1913. The deal was that the bankers would control the currency, and thereby the nation's economy, while the government would be provided with an unlimited amount of inflated dollars to fight its wars.

The bookkeeper's trick of creating money out of thin air, charging interest for its use, then forcing it down the throats of weaker nations by threat of violence, is what has allowed the Anglo-American empire, since the founding of the Bank of England in 1696, gradually to conquer the world. Though President Woodrow Wilson signed the Federal Reserve Act into law, he saw what that action meant. Greco cites Wilson as writing: "There has come about an extraordinary and very sinister concentration in the control of business in the country....The great monopoly in this country is the monopoly of big credits."

Among other ill effects, the system has ruined the value of the currency. The inflation caused by large issues of bank-created loans is seized upon by the government which goes along because inflation reduces the cost of its deficits. Investors buy Treasury bonds denominated in Federal Reserve Notes then watch their value evaporate over time. In fact Federal Reserve Notes have lost over 95 percent of their value since they were first introduced.

Moreover, it's additional inflation caused by bank-generated interest that drives up the costs of goods and services, forcing everyone in the economy to try to defend themselves by raising their prices to the max. Greco spells this out too, which almost every economist in the world, with the exception perhaps of Australia's James Cumes, overlooks.

Bank interest has other tragic effects. It was high interest rates, for instance, that destroyed the Idaho potato industry. A farmer from that region told me at a conference a few years ago that when interest rates skyrocketed in the early 1980s, he asked the president of one of the Federal Reserve Banks why they did it. The answer was they were "ordered" to raise interest rates by the international banking system.

Make no mistake, it's the banking system, facilitated by the Fed, not unwary borrowers, who brought on the collapse of 2008.

Now, in 2009, the bankers, mainly those in the U.S., have so shattered the world economy by debt mounted on debt that there may be no reprieve except the creation of a slave society based on rule by the rich over the masses of whatever peons should happen to survive the downturn and its tragic effects on employment, health, the food and water supply, and even our ability to cope with climate change.

The political establishment, expressing itself in pronouncements by organizations like the Council on Foreign Relations, see a future, not of economic democracy or increased financial pluralism, but consolidation of world currencies into a small number overseen at the top by the world's financial oligarchy. Citing the writings of Benn Steil, the CFR's Director of International Economics, Greco writes: "The ostensible plan is to reduce global exchange media to three—one each for Europe,

the Americas, and Asia. One might reasonably suppose that at a later stage, those three would be combined into one currency also under the control of the global banking elite."

Greco concludes: "The New World Order is upon us."

With ample justification, he even goes apocalyptic, citing *The Book of Revelation* in demonstrating the import on a spiritual plane of the elitist takeover: *And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. (Revelation 13: 16-17)*

But is it really the end, or is there a new world waiting to be born? Greco thinks so. He speaks of the end of an era when unlimited economic growth fed by massive influxes of debt-based money is no longer sustainable. He writes: "That our global civilization cannot continue on its current path seems evident....But I think our collective consciousness is beginning to change. We are becoming aware of limits and are reaching that part of our evolutionary program that says, 'Stop!'"

Part of the awareness of how to stop must focus on the institutions responsible for the crisis. Greco praises Ron Paul for calling out the Federal Reserve in the 2008 presidential campaign. He cites a statement Paul made to Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan in a 2004 hearing where Paul told Greenspan that the power of the Fed "challenges the whole concept of freedom and liberty and sound money." Thus Paul and other monetary reformers, though largely ignored by the mainstream media and political establishment, have made it clear that change must start with what really lies at the bottom of elite control: how money is made and who makes it.

Unfortunately, few progressive economists, including Paul Krugman, Joseph Stiglitz, and Robert Reich comprehend the monetary causes of today's disasters. Instead of demanding reforms that would make money the proper servant of a sustainable economy, most call for more stimulus spending; i.e., more government debt, along with "reform" of a financial system that is corrupt down to its very DNA.

So do we really need the bankers' fake currency, today backed by nothing but a federal deficit of \$12 trillion and growing by the day?

Greco says we don't, and this is what his book is about. But it's not about doing without the necessities of life, or heading for the hills with a gun and backpack. Nor is it about important efforts at macro-level monetary reform like those of the American Monetary Institute, Congressman Dennis Kucinich, or advocates for a basic income guarantee. Rather it's about individuals, groups, and communities taking control of the monetary system at the grassroots level and creating an entirely new basis for trade than bank-owed debt.

Greco writes about "a new paradigm approach to the exchange function." The solution, he says, "is to provide interest-free credit to producers within the process of mutual credit clearing. That is the process of offsetting purchases against sales within an association of merchants, manufacturers, and workers. It will eventually include everyone who

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Bursting Our Bubbles II, Or Topsy-Turvy

Jim Hogue

"Things are seldom what they seem . . ."
W.S. Gilbert, HMS Pinafore

In order to sell the manure that passes through the body of Congress, they must call it by another name. A bill must be named the opposite of what it really does.

Examples:

1) "The Habeas Corpus Restoration Act" buries the right of Habeas Corpus six feet under.

2) "The Help America Vote Act" (HAVA, called the "Help Yourself to a Vote Act" by those in the Voting Integrity movement) enables election fraud on a massive scale, and enriches certain well-connected Voting Machine companies such as Diebold. (Diebold is used exclusively in Vermont despite its proven record of corruption).

3) "The Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007" is an open challenge to the Constitution, institutionalizes treason, and lays the legal groundwork for a reign of terror. It protects the traitors who remain the real threat to our safety, and it targets patriots and whistle-blowers involved in election integrity, 9/11 Truth, and other endeavors of public good.

4) "The American Clean Energy and Security Act" lets polluters reap huge profits by charging more for fuel, and does nothing to address environmental issues.

5) "The Real ID Act of 2005" proposes a national ID card that would erode the kind of personal freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution (which this writer considers inalienable) such as travel, voting, business transactions, and privacy.

6) HR 2749: "The Food Safety Enhancement Act of 2009," called by some, "The Agribusiness Empowerment Act." Food safety is the stated issue, but that is just the cover. The real purpose of HR 2749 seems to be to weaken the protections

the name of peace, who constrain us in the name of freedom, who sicken us in the name of public health, and who rob us in the name of duty. Look to every aspect of life. School systems are not about education. Arts councils are not about art. Humanities councils are not about the humanities. The music business is not about music. The theater is not about putting on great plays. The Federal Reserve banking system is neither federal nor a reserve, nor even about banking.

"If God had wanted us to vote, he would have given us candidates." —Jay Leno

that were put in place in 1938 to enable meaningful supervision over food, drugs, and cosmetics, and to spread needed enforcement of legitimate concerns so thin as to be impossible, and then to burden small farmers with egregious regulations that make it even less profitable for them to remain in business.

These examples introduce my theme: that things are not what they are named. My failure to grasp this accounts for why I've been stymied from time to time in the passage through my own field of dreams.

Not alone are the politicians who pass things off on their constituents – who send us off to war in

The crystallizing of my understanding of this "currency" – this medium of exchange – came to me after reading the article by Mark Slouka in September's *Harpers* entitled "Dehumanization."

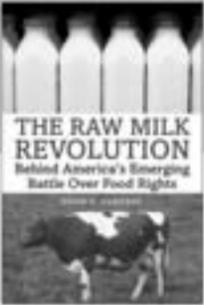
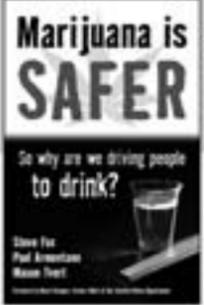
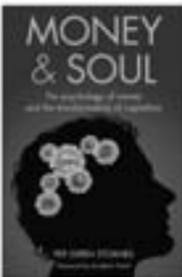
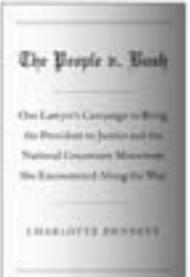
Mr. Slouka blames the dehumanization of our culture and educational system on an emphasis on "mathandscience." I found his indictment against the feckless, gutless employees in the humanities business to be accurate. I was an employee in the humanities (a high school teacher of French, English and Theater) for 14 years, and my problems in these endeavors were, in part, due to my failure to grasp that my job, as my employers saw it, was

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Homestead Security: Harvesting Value from Your Leach Field (Soil To Oil and Back Again, Part II) *Ben Falk*

This Homestead Security column represents Part II of “Soil to Oil and Back Again,” begun in the Fall 2009 issue of *Vermont Commons*. Part I (“Rapid Topsoil Formation In The Solar Age”) described the loss, due to erosion, of some six billion tons of topsoil in Vermont following clear-cutting and over-grazing of 80 percent of the state’s land base in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, which leaves Vermonters needing to massively rebuild our soil resource in preparation for a post-oil age.

The article asked: “Is this possible? Due to the sheer volume of matter needing to be converted into topsoil any system that builds soil rapidly will utilize the most abundant and potent resources at hand. Strategies are emerging for combining these ingredients to make fertile topsoil with great speed.”

In this and the following two parts of the “Soil to Oil and Back Again” series I will discuss some of the lesser-known soil-building strategies that have particular relevance for the post-oil homestead and small farm. I have not attempted to cover the most common forms of soil building, such as composting, as there are ample resources available on such topics.

Nutrient Cycling

To rebuild topsoil at the magnitude required, we need to scavenge all possible sources of organic matter and fertility, with an eye particularly focused on the lowest-hanging fruit. Where are the easiest, most practical sources of fertility available? Cycling existing nutrients that are now “lost” or underutilized is the most effective starting point here – and luckily, such nutrients are, literally, in the front yard.

First, “plugging the leaks” is vital if we are to get the maximum benefits from any soil-building system. Sending food scraps, cardboard and other organic matter to the landfill, tossing animal manures over the bank, and other ways by which people discard potentially valuable nutrients represent leaks in the system and undermine its effectiveness. Plugging such leaks requires cycling nutrients on-site, turning waste into food, and is the foundation for a viable, productive soil-building system.

Obvious nutrient sources are well known and utilized by many, from food scraps to garden residues (plant parts, immature fruits, etc.), lawn clippings, leaves, and other yard debris. All of these should be turned back into soil as quickly and thoroughly as possible via composting. There are, however, other sources of fertility often overlooked on the homestead site, the most potent of which are the nutrients we, ourselves, emit on a daily basis. Human effluent can be captured by a composting toilet or humanure system, urine watering can or, most commonly, by an in-ground septic system.

A typically managed septic system represents the greatest loss of energy and nutrients from a



Many Vermont homesteaders need to go to extra lengths to rebuild their soil and reclaim their land. But with rewards like these, it'll all be worth it. BEN FALK

typical homestead, aside from solid waste and heating. Modern septic systems are the product of well-meaning regulation gone awry. A high proportion of septic systems don't function as they are intended to, due to clogged main lines, and operate for decades in a seemingly functional state while varying amounts of untreated wastewater leaks into the local watershed. If you can smell your leach field at any time throughout the year, it's leaking black water into the nearest river. *Leach* is what these systems were designed to do, and leach they do, silently seeping valuable nutrients and water away from the site and into the watershed where they do only harm.

Even when septic systems function as intended they are grossly unsustainable; they prop up bureaucracy and industries – from petroleum to plastics – and simultaneously leach value from the home economy. Essentially, we are paying industry to take our fertility from us. Indeed, the modern septic system and leach field perpetuates an anemic citizenry and empire.

'Wise Use' for the leach field – with caution

Yet recapturing a great portion of these concentrated nutrients and water is a simple matter of growing plants in the leach field – plants that can be harvested, composted, and returned to the soil as fertilizer. Such “fertility farming” should be applied where nutrients are excessive in the landscape – e.g., sewage treatment areas and fertilizer runoff zones. Fertility farming and bioremediation go hand-in-hand to counteract the effects of the industrial economy, which tends to mix nutrients and toxins together.

Gardening/farming your leach field can take

many forms, and we have yet to figure out the optimal ways of using these increasingly archaic systems. (Composting toilets and humanure piles are the most appropriate ways to harness human nutrients.) So be creative. Depending on what is most needed in the system, and on the history of

A septic system represents the greatest loss of energy and nutrients from a typical homestead, aside from solid waste and heating.

the leach field, one can either grow food or fertility crops. For biomass production, fertility crops such as grasses or comfrey are allowed to grow tall and then harvested with a scythe and used as a compost amendment or for mulch around vegetable beds, fruit or nut trees, or as animal fodder. Food crops should be plants that do not produce on-ground or in-ground fruits like squash or root vegetables.

Unless you know the history of the field's inputs and can be sure that it contains no heavy metals or other bioaccumulating toxins, it is safest to only grow fertility crops. If you *do* grow food crops bear this in mind: Plants cannot move bacteria and other organic pathogens through their tissues, so you can't get e-coli from sunflower seeds or tomatoes perched above your leach field. Plants *can* bioaccumulate heavy metals (usually in their tissues and

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Local, Diverse, and Equitable, continued from page 5

To be sure, in Vermont we enjoy the energy availability that supports a high standard of living, particularly in terms of winter heating and mobility; but offsetting this are climate change, rising energy costs, the democratic deficit in decisions about energy policy, the political influence of absentee owners of energy systems, and the fact that most of the dollars we spend on heating fuel, transportation fuel, and electricity leave the state, to be used in ways and places that do not vitalize our economy.

Bioenergy therefore has its greatest positive impact within its own economic source region, and cannot and should not be globalized.

The democratizing value of bioenergy

With future availability and prices of fossil and nuclear fuels in question, it is clear that conservation, efficiency, and renewable energy sources will have to regain a substantial share of our energy regime, at the same time ensuring that our households, businesses, and community institutions continue to enjoy the energy intensity that a decent quality of life requires. Bioenergy has a key role to play in this.

Bioenergy is by definition local. Because of transportation costs combined with relatively low EROEI, bioenergy economies become uncompetitive beyond source-to-use distances of a few dozen miles. Bioenergy therefore has its greatest positive impact within its own economic source region, and cannot and should not be globalized.

Bioenergy sources are geographically and materially diverse. Wood, switch grass, agricultural waste, waste from food processing, etc. – i.e., bioenergy feedstocks – can be locally produced in many places and on many levels of scale. There is therefore much greater potential for the widespread ownership and economic participation of individuals and households in bioenergy economies than there is in fossil fuel economies. That is good for the economy and good for democracy. It is also good for spreading technical competencies in local populations – skills and knowledge that otherwise are concentrated in distant, centralized energy-company sites, as they are today.

Bioenergy will never provide the blast of dense energy into society that fossil fuels have provided for a century. A natural limitation of bioenergy is its continual reliance on how much sunlight nature manages to embody as sugars and other molecules in the living tissue it builds each year (i.e., the net natural product of photosynthesis). Studies consistently show that currently available wood biomass, for example, can only provide fractions of a percent of a typical state's primarily fossil energy consumption. Even with more efficient collection of slash and waste wood in forest industries, harvesting of whole trees for burning, cultivation of energy crops, the development of cellulosic ethanol, the industrialization of algae-

based biodiesel, and comprehensive digestion of sewage, food-industry, and other wastes for biogas production, it is hard to imagine bioenergy accounting for more than several percent of Vermont's energy diet through this century – certainly no more than 10 percent.

Nonetheless, it will be a key component of a new energy regime that strengthens, rather than erodes, our democracy, local and regional economic vitality, economic equity and justice, and ecological health.

Vermont appears to be emerging as a leader in the most appropriate forms of bioenergy (corn ethanol excluded from this definition). With the support of state political leaders and agencies, local governments, and entrepreneurs and investors, the development of biomass, biogas, and liquid biofuel projects in Vermont is moving at an exciting pace, even in these hard economic times.

There are currently five biomass (wood chip) combined-heat-and-power (CHP) district heating projects underway, all of which have received some state or federal funding, in Brattleboro, Burlington, Middlebury, Montpelier, and Randolph. The groups have started forming a network for cooperation, assisted by BERCC – the Biomass Energy Resource Center – in Montpelier. Added to these district projects are numerous woodchip boilers for schools and other facilities, including a major campus CHP project just started at Green Mountain College, and the state-of-the-art CHP facility and energy-crop research at Middlebury.

With the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund and UVM playing major roles, liquid biofuels development is substantial. For example, UVM Extension is working with farms to develop on-farm biodiesel and ethanol production, and the integrated energy-food projects now being planned by

Carbon Harvest Energy of Burlington, with a first facility having passed the initial approval hurdles in Brattleboro, offer a stunning vision of how food and biodiesel could be produced in the future.

Biogas is also emerging as a growth sector. Central Vermont Public Service Corp. has found success with its Cow Power™ manure-to-electricity biogas program, now operating on six farms in Vermont. Vermont Technical College in Randolph is developing a food-waste biodigester project that will provide both heat and electricity to the college, and has received nearly \$1 million in funding so far.

These are only some of the bioenergy developments underway in Vermont, but they are gaining momentum with support from our Washington delegation, state government, town governments, colleges and universities, entrepreneurs, and communities as a whole. Progress may appear slow, especially if you do not have direct contact with these efforts, but they are exactly what is needed for Vermont, and will have important benefits for our political culture and prosperity in the uncertain, possibly turbulent future ahead. •

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Abolish Usury, continued from page 13

on the basis of their economic prospects. Once lent out, Kellogg's public credit notes would flow into circulation, providing the basis for a new currency backed by the assets of individual borrowers. These notes would be the only source of money. Kellogg lived in a pre-corporate world, compared to today, and he presumed that flesh-and-blood persons would be the only ones borrowing from public credit banks. Corporations as we know them played a growing but still limited role in his day; he did not imagine, it seems, that they would be able to borrow from the Safety Fund. And although he envisioned only land as collateral for his loans, today we might accept other reliable assets.

It is worth considering Kellogg's own summary of his system:

"In the plan we are about to propose for the formation of a National Currency by the General Government," he tells us, "all the money circulated in the United States will be issued by a national institution, and will be a representative of actual property, therefore it can never fail to be a good and safe tender in payment of debts. It will be loaned to individuals in every State, county, and town, at a uniform rate of interest, and hence will be of invariable value throughout the Union. All persons who offer good and permanent security will be at all times supplied with money, and for any term of years during which they will regularly pay the interest. Therefore, no town, county, or State, need be dependent upon any other for money, because each has real property enough to secure many times the amount which it will require.

"If more than the necessary amount of money be issued, the surplus will be immediately funded, and go out of use without injury. It will be impossible for foreign nations, or any number of banks, or capitalists, to derange the monetary system, either by changing the rate of interest, or by inducing a scarcity or a surplus of money."³

Those not willing to hold Safety Fund money they borrowed as cash have the option of lending it back to the Safety Fund.

"The money will bear no interest," Kellogg goes on to add, just as our cash today bears no interest,

"but may always be exchanged for . . . Safety Fund Notes, which will bear interest. Those who may not wish to purchase property or pay debts with their money, can always loan it to the Institution for a Safety Fund Note, bearing an interest of one per cent. per annum. Therefore the money will always be good, for it will be the legal tender for debts and property, and can always be invested to produce an income. The money being loaned at one and one-tenth per cent., and the Safety Fund Notes bearing but one per cent., the difference . . . will induce owners of money to lend to individuals, and thus prevent continual issuing and funding of money by the Institution."⁴

A centralized national currency would be replaced, in Kellogg's system, by a locally issued currency. But that currency would everywhere be subject to common national standards, ensuring that each local public credit bank reliably issued equivalent units of currency. A dollar issued by one local public credit bank of the Safety Fund, Kellogg intended, would be worth the same as, and be freely interchangeable with, one issued by any other. The independence of local branches would be guaranteed by the discretionary power reserved to them as a local monopoly actually to loan money; the compatibility of their monies would be ensured under federal law by fixing the value of the dollar by law at 1.1 percent/year – that is, by lending money everywhere to citizens at that rate.

Kellogg's system is designed for local control of capital and resources: "The Safety Fund," he tells us, "will lend money at a low rate of interest to all applicants furnishing the requisite landed security; hence every town, county, and State, which has the power to perform the necessary labor, can make internal improvements without pledging its property to large cities or to foreign nations to borrow money."⁵ It is the people in every town, county, and state – those who labor and produce – that Kellogg is talking about, not corporations or governments. The goal is to establish and preserve economic decentralization.

Amounts of money lent in Kellogg's system would vary considerably from place to place, with

some areas needing and creating more currency than others. The solvency of local federal public credit banks would be guaranteed by collateral put up by borrowers, and the money supply would be stabilized by repayment of loans as they came due. The interchangeability of public credit bank notes would ensure a wide circulation for the new money. Kellogg's Safety Fund system can be understood as a form of free banking, but done as a regulated non-profit public service rather than as an unregulated and unstable private for-profit enterprise.

Interest for replacement, not wealth

The beauty of Kellogg's system lies in its decentralized but standardized and self-regulating nature. The government's role is not to run a central bank, or fund a monetary system, but to fix the standard of locally issued money, just as the Bureau of Weights and Measures fixes the standard of the yard or the pound. There would be no central bank, and no need of one.

How would the government fix the value of the dollar? "The worth and amount of the interest on the dollar," Kellogg tells us, "constitute and determine the value of the dollar. . . Demand and supply are sometimes said to give value to money; but it would be as reasonable to assert that demand and supply fix the length of the yard, the weight of the pound . . . Money is valuable in proportion to its power to accumulate value by interest. A dollar which can be loaned for 12 per cent. interest, is worth twice as much as one that can be loaned for but six per cent., just as a railroad stock which will annually bring in twelve per cent., is worth twice as much as one that annually brings in six per cent."⁶

A dollar of fixed value thereby would be one with a fixed interest rate. To achieve a stable currency, Kellogg insisted that this rate be fixed by law; perhaps today it would take a constitutional amendment. Living in an era of hard money backed by precious metals, inflation was not a problem for Kellogg. In our era of fiat money and steady inflation, we see the value of money eroding as it loses purchasing power. Kellogg's monetary system, with money created exclusively by loans on good collateral, automatically precludes the kinds of inflationary abuses we suffer.

Kellogg determined that this fixed interest rate be 1.1 percent. Why 1.1 percent? A one percent rate of interest, we might note, was the limit on interest established by the Council of Nicaea in the fourth century; any rate beyond that was condemned as usurious.

"A rate of interest of even two per cent. per annum," Kellogg tells us, "would put it out of the power of the people to fulfill their contracts. The establishment of this rate of interest would be equivalent to the passing of a law, compelling the laboring classes to double the capital of a nation, in favor of capitalists once in thirty-four and a half years, besides producing their own support. . . [W]ould not a tribute or tax like this keep us forever in poverty?"⁷

A 1.1-percent rate, he argues, fairly redistributes capital, and is a sustainable rate of interest – a rate that allows for the replacement of resources over a lifetime while avoiding too little or too much debt.

continued on page 23

Designs for Bart Merle-Smith's Hot Tub Emporium 2 in Burlington Vermont. This space ship in an enormous warehouse has private hot tub spa compartments in each car that are designed to transport one to another world. Such as "Krypton, Superman" birth planet"

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Bursting Our Bubbles, continued from page 16
not about teaching those subjects. My blindness to this fact, and my effort to teach in spite of the administration, led to certain confrontations. Nor would the teachers' union support me, as teaching was not in its portfolio of concerns either.

Theater is tolerated if it's about community or therapy or inclusion or prestige. It is not tolerated as theater for its own sake.

Mr. Slouka explains the second-class status of the humanities, but the roots and constancy of the problem are not within the scope of his article. He does not mention, for example, that the hidden mission of the Carnegie Endowment was to control the State Department so as to prolong World War I. And subsequently, in consort with the Ford, Rockefeller, and Guggenheim foundations, they continued to influence education, to effect an "alteration in the teaching of American History," and to mold "large scale industry into an administrable unit" (Norman Dodd, Chair of the Reese Commission, 1982 interview with G. Edward Griffin). Their success is clear. Paulson waves his hand, and it is done.

I'll attempt to add evidence to Mr. Slouka's case from my experiences as a high school teacher. It's hardly profound. It's a thing that any shop assistant knows when selling a dress or a pair of sunglasses.

My teaching the craft of acting in an acting class, for example, was a nightmare for the administration, as all they wanted were theater games that occupied a space of 40 minutes for students who needed an easy credit. I was asked to engage students in activities such as pretending to throw balls to each other in a circle, and to disengage from the complicated, issues of character and motivation. I refused. A physical adjustment such as dealing with the cold or fatigue has its place, but the unrelated "sports" improvisation is a game for first graders, not students of acting. I thought my expertise (a master's degree in theater, professional training and experience as an actor, playwright and director) would carry some weight in the argument. The argument was whether or not an acting class should teach the intellectually demanding craft of acting. The study of acting is a process that teaches students how to think – to understand ideas and character and human motivation – background, history, psychology, metaphor, and human conflict among other aspects of life that go into realizing human behavior for the student-actor and audience. It develops discipline and a sense of responsibility.

But that was the problem. The administration wanted none of that. I was questioned by the principal as to the appropriateness of discussing ideas! And it is only now, 25 years later, that I see why I was driven out of that position to be replaced by a teacher with little ability to achieve these goals. The new teacher could fulfill the needs of the school, i.e. engage the students in few intellectual challenges,

and thereby guarantee that the classes would be useless to anyone who wanted to learn the craft. I was tormenting myself because the administration was devoting its resources to preventing me from doing my job. It never occurred to me that I didn't know what my job was.

Mr. Slouka points out that today we see a desiccated, pathetic and boring approach to all the humanities. Are those responsible desiccated, pathetic and boring? If so, is this by design? Is it worse now than it was in 1984 when I left teaching? What are those in the humanities selling us if not the humanities?

Whatever it is, it is not what they say it is.

Manufacturing compliant citizens

A few years ago I went to a two-day conference called "The Right to Vote" at which electronic voting was not a topic. I asked the "experts" if they had any concerns about electronic voting. Silly me. They had been chosen as experts because the conference wasn't really about voting rights. I don't know what it was about, but calling it "The Right to Vote" should have tipped me off that the then-rampant fraud from Florida to Ohio would not be open for discussion. David Dill, Bev Harris, Brad Friedman *et al* were not mentioned, nor did the invited experts seem to know who these people were, nor find them relevant to the right to vote. Nor are secretaries of state interested in the topic, because, in many cases, voting isn't voting; it's a nostalgic fiction. And furthermore, as Jay Leno said, "If God had wanted us to vote, he would have given us candidates." (Good candidates seldom win when He does, however.)

The conference was as useless in championing the future of voting integrity as a play-school theater game is in guaranteeing virtuosity in the craft of acting.

Mr. Slouka points out the irony of the push to create employees who know their math and science but who can't think clearly and creatively, and communicate accordingly. He makes the case that, in the minds of the powers that be, there is a necessary trade-off in learning and values, and that we should be emphasizing "mathandscience" in order to produce better workers.

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I propose that there is a net loss across the board, and not a trade-off at all. The young mind is hungry and cannot be satiated with "mathandscience" alone. It cannot learn one subject without others. It needs various disciplines to thoroughly understand each discipline. This is especially true in the discipline that brings all the humanities

The educational system has shown us scant means or encouragement to practice citizenship. We see a pink slip, jail time, or death if we practice it with any conviction.

together: the theater. Theater calls upon archaeology, history, linguistics, mechanics, electronics, art, carpentry, architecture, acoustic engineering, psychology, literacy, foreign language, dance, physical strength, flexibility, memory And wouldn't-cha-know-it, theater is always at the bottom of the pecking order except for those schools especially devoted to it. And when it is given attention, it's usually as a means for . . . you can see this coming . . . something else. It's not about theater. It's about community or therapy or inclusion or prestige. Theater is tolerated if these other, superficial values are manifest. It is not tolerated as theater for its own sake. It is as though the values and skills mentioned above, from archaeology to literacy, were irrelevant.

continued on page 25

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National Healthcare "Debate", continued from page 11 patients, physicians, clinics, hospitals, and insurance providers are in community with one another. To be quite blunt, if I decide to have a nice \$100,000 open-heart surgery performed on me, I must be prepared to face the other citizens in my community, who know I have spent \$100,000 of the community's healthcare resources on myself. There must be a feeling of, "We are all in this together." My life may be important to me, but I am a part of a community in which others want to share in the pool of healthcare resources. Resources are finite and must be rationed by the community.

Single-payer health insurance may not be the panacea it is thought to be.

The Swiss healthcare system, unknown to most Americans, comes very close to achieving this ideal. The Swiss government requires everyone to purchase health insurance with their own money from one of 400 Swiss health insurance funds, some of which are private, others public. If individuals cannot pay for health insurance, then most Swiss cantons transfer funds to them. Ninety-five percent of the population is insured against illness. The delivery of healthcare services is decentralized to the canton or town level.

The Swiss healthcare system works, and it works very well, as evidenced by Switzerland's high life expectancy and low infant mortality rates. Swiss healthcare is second to none.

What are the lessons to be gleaned from the Swiss healthcare experience?

1. Single-payer health insurance may not be the panacea it is thought to be.
2. Whenever possible, healthcare insurance and the delivery of healthcare services should be decentralized to the community level, where the community might be a town, a country, a village, or a region in a state like Vermont.
3. With healthcare, as with other things, bigger may not be better.

My favorite hospital is the tiny 19-bed Grace Cottage Hospital located in Townshend, Vermont. Thanks to a very generous and supportive community, which includes devoted patients, committed volunteers, an amazingly talented, compassionate and hardworking staff, and wonderful benefactors, Vermont's smallest hospital will soon celebrate six decades of saving lives, caring for the sick, helping those who are dying, and encouraging those who are well to stay that way.

It's the Vermont way of living, staying well, and dying.

The United States could learn much from Vermont and Switzerland. •

Homestead Security, continued from page 17

not seeds, though research is inconclusive) and other inorganic compounds. If in doubt, consider testing the plants grown in your leach field.

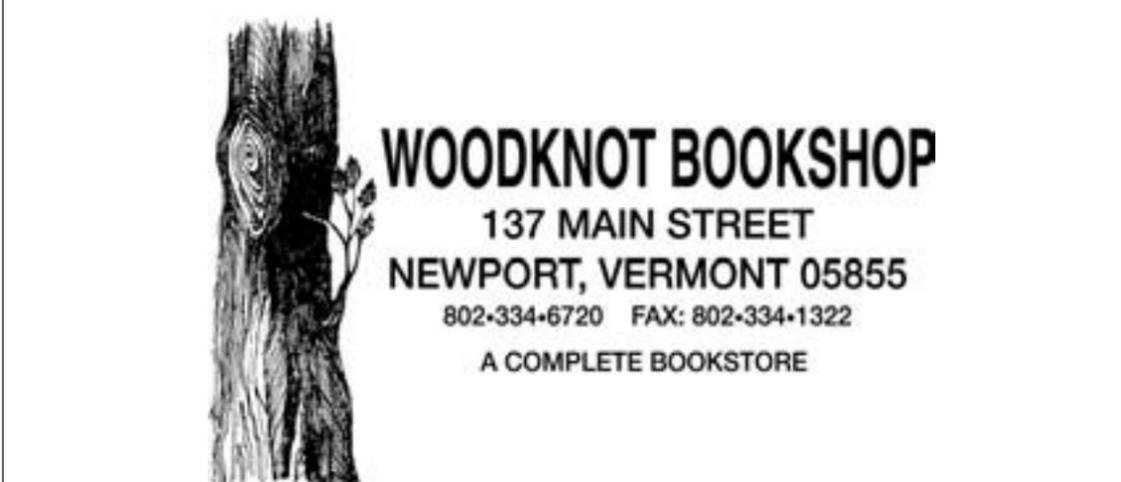
As you prepare to produce value on your leach field, the following points should be kept in mind:

- Use "heavy feeders" (plants that require lots of nitrogen): corn, sunflowers, and grasses are good selections.
- Don't use trees or other deep-rooting perennials, as they tend to clog up the distribution pipes and can topple over, exposing the field's inner components and causing damage.
- Biomass plants that mine and accumulate subsoil nutrients are usually best, such as comfrey.
- Consider forage crops such as sunflowers or corn if you keep animals.
- Don't cultivate or dig deeply in the leach field.
- Plant the field early, as high nitrogen loading in the field can significantly delay flowering. You may need to grow multiple, successive years of heavy-feeding crops before nitrogen levels are low enough (nice problem to have!) for flowering to come on time.
- Keeping urine out of the leach field and saving it for direct fertigation during the growing season is one easy way to avoid the nutrient loss of the septic system. Human urine contains a near-perfect spectrum of plant nutrients (not surprising, given the co-evolution of humans and plants) which, when watered down at a ratio of 1:10 to 1:40, is ideal plant food for the vegetative stage of growth.

If you can smell your leach field at any time across the year, it's leaking untreated black water into the nearest river.

- Think of the leach field as a transitional and salvage resource. A composting toilet is far more regenerative and affordable over the long haul, consumes no energy to operate, is totally maintainable, requires no heavy equipment or dump truck loads of material to construct, and uses 100 percent of its inputs. If you're building new, consider putting the \$7,000-\$14,000 cost of a leach field to better use, such as more insulation for your building, tools, a masonry oven, re-skilling courses, and countless other useful post-oil resources.

Subsequent parts of this four-part series will address other techniques for quickly and efficiently rebuilding our topsoil resource, such as Cover Cropping, Intensive Tall-Grass Grazing, Keyline Agriculture, Biological Inoculants, and Biochar. •



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Abolish Usury, continued from page 19

Kellogg demonstrates the point through homely examples such as the following: If I borrow money at 2 percent to buy a house, I commit myself to replace the value of my house not once, but twice over 34-and-a-half years, for that is how long it takes 2 percent interest on principal to build up to equal the principal itself. I would have to build in that time three houses (the first one, for myself, a second to pay back the principal, and a third to pay back the interest). At 7 percent I would have to replace the value of my house every 10 years, which would be the equivalent of committing myself to building in that time seven houses in addition to the one I build for myself. These additional houses, of course, are not mine to own and enjoy or profit from, but are wealth which I am obliged to create and turn over to my creditors.

If we imagine the economy as a whole operating on money borrowed at these rates, we see why Kellogg thought even a rate as low as 2 percent

posed an intolerable burden. Such a “growth” economy is unsustainable insofar as debtors must repay lenders at rates exceeding the current replacement potential of the economy. Kellogg captures this unsustainability nicely: “. . . the present rates of interest greatly exceed the increase of wealth by natural production, and consequently, call for production beyond the ability of producers to supply.”⁸

The debtor in Kellogg’s day and ours is compelled to extract, by hook or crook, more resources than he or she otherwise would. Economic “growth” has been accomplished largely by this pressure to exhaust finite resources, particularly fossil fuels, to meet usurious debts. In this time of global resource depletion and large populations, we may have to adopt a steady-state economy more or less as Kellogg suggests, whether we like it or not. Such an economy would be a replacement economy over the course of a lifetime, one which can be financed, according to Kellogg, by a monetary

system where interest on debts is fixed at about 1 percent. A 1-percent interest rate turns out to be approximately the rate which allows a population to replace over a lifetime – roughly 70 years, the old Biblical measure – the goods and services it consumes, leaving to posterity not further debt but a material legacy equivalent to that with which it began. If I am lucky enough to borrow money to buy a house and repay it at 1.1 percent, I have in fact 60 years – essentially an adult lifetime – until my interest payments equal the original loan, which is equivalent to paying for a second house in addition to the first. I am, with that interest, in effect replacing the value of the house I use up or consume over a lifetime, after having used the principal to build it in the first place. Similarly, for the economy as a whole. Kellogg’s 1.1-percent interest rate beautifully integrates the natural individual human life cycle with the ecological cycle of replacing what you consume.

Kellogg intended his fixing of the value of money at 1 percent to be a universal law, with no one anywhere allowed to charge more than 1.1 percent for money loaned out. He writes of banks “closing up their business,” but being allowed nonetheless the full value of their assets, insofar as “no injustice will be done to them, for the law making paper money [Safety Fund notes] a tender in payment of debts, gives to it a value equal to that possessed by gold and silver money regulated at the same rate of interest. While the establishment of the Safety Fund can do no wrong to the banks, it will greatly benefit those engaged in production and distribution.”⁹

Kellogg refers here to the specie-backed banks of his day, but his argument applies just as well to the fiat money of Federal Reserve notes in today’s banking system. Capital under his system would become what it is not today: cheaply and widely available at local public credit banks to anyone credit-worthy. Kellogg had a strict standard for collateral; how far that might be adjusted for current conditions, if at all, is an open question. Other questions as well remain, beyond the limits of this essay: Might public credit loans be available to students lacking collateral? Might public credit banks offer 1.1-percent-interest credit cards? Might homebuyers take out public credit loans instead of traditional mortgages? Might small business (sole proprietorships and partnerships) take out public credit loans instead of borrowing money from commercial banks? And so on. •

Part 2 will be published in January 2010.

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Endnotes

- 1 See, for instance, an 1841 pamphlet: Edward Kellogg, *Remarks Upon Usury and Its Effects: A National Bank a Remedy, in a Letter, &c.*, available at: <http://www.libertarian-labyrinth.org/kellogg/remarksonusury.pdf>
- 2 Lause, Mark A., *Young America: Land, Labor, and the Republican Community*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005, p. 122
- 3 Edward Kellogg, *A New Monetary System: The only Means of Securing the Respective Rights of Labor and Property and of Protecting the Public from Financial Revulsions*, [1861], reprint New York: Burt Franklin, 1970, p. 274
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 276
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 307
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 61-2
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 138
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 266
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 302

Free Vermont Media, continued from page 15
buys and sells, or makes and receives disbursements of any kind.”

Greco is one of the world's leading experts in describing alternative or complementary currencies. These are self-regulating systems that facilitate “reciprocal exchange,” not using government legal tender but which are still allowed under the currency laws so long as taxes are not evaded.

Greco discusses the large and growing worldwide “LETS” movement—Local Exchange Trading Systems, like the Ithaca HOURS system in Ithaca, New York. He describes the Swiss WIR Bank, the longest-running credit clearing system in the world, with over 70,000 members. He writes about the national and international barter exchanges that involve over 400,000 businesses trading at an annual level of \$10 billion.

Greco also describes the world-famous Mondragon Cooperatives from the Basque region of Northern Spain. Started by a Roman Catholic priest in 1941, the Mondragon system, he says, is “the hub of what is probably the most successful and progressive social cooperative economy in modern history.”

He also tells the inspiring story of the Argentine trading clubs—the *trueques*—which, when used with “provincial bonds” issued by regional governments, rescued that country during the 2001 economic collapse brought on by the collusion between the Argentine government and the International Monetary Fund.

Credit clearing is not new. Greco traces it to the medieval European fairs. These exchanges are like banking clearing houses. The world's largest is the automated clearing house—ACH—operated by the Federal Reserve.

But as Greco points out: “The clearing process need not be restricted to banks; it can be applied directly to transactions between buyers and sellers of goods and services. The LETS systems that have proliferated in communities around the world use the credit clearing process, as do commercial trade exchanges. Credit clearing systems are, in essence, clearing houses—but their members are businesses and individuals instead of banks.”

Alternative currency and trading systems, says Greco, are the wave of the future. Even though most only mount up to partial local successes, they show what can be done. Greco likens these efforts to the Wright Brothers' first flight that covered 120 feet. They show, he says, that the potential exists for local, regional, then national and international money-free exchanges that eventually could be joined by a single web-based trading platform. This could eventually get rid of the corruption of debt-money altogether.

Chapter 16 of the book is about “A Regional Economic Development Plan Based on Credit Clearing” that shows the potential. Greco writes, “The credit clearing exchange is the key element that enables a community to develop a sustainable economy under local control and to maintain a high standard of living and quality of life.”

This would be a real revolution. What can governments do to help? Perhaps only by removing, as Greco recommends, the privileged position of bank debt-money as legal tender. Instead, let bank money compete with market-based alternative currencies and credit exchanges, if it can.

Greco's book is a how-to-do-it manual that updates and expands on his previous books, *Money and Debt: A Solution to the Global Crisis*, *New Money*

The keys are simple: Promote the establishment of private complementary exchange systems — and use them. Buy from your friends and neighbors whenever possible. Contribute your time, energy, and money to whatever moves things in the right direction.

for Healthy Communities, and *Money: Understanding and Creating Alternatives to Legal Tender*. Greco also operates a website that offers advice and support to worthwhile community initiatives.

My own view is that no one should wait to see who takes the lead in creating the monetary and credit-clearing systems of the future. The time is now. There is no more reason to delay. If the people of the world do not join together in this kind of action, they can likely kiss their economic future and perhaps their livelihoods good-bye. The controllers of the world, those with the big money, the ones who run the banking systems, who own the global corporations, and who finance politicians like Obama, the Bushes, and the Clintons, are now poised in their blindness to extinguish the light of democracy on the planet for good.

Greco is implying that the power of the elite is not only dated but illusory. Thus the way to proceed is not just to oppose them. If they are opposed, they'll do what they always do, which is to roll out the SWAT teams, the military in the streets, the tear gas, the sound cannon, the concentration camps, the Patriot Acts, the torture chambers, because that is all they know, and it's what they do best.

The money monopoly translates into a monopoly on violence on an ascending scale. We know that the U.S. sells more weapons abroad than any other nation, and we know that it is war above all that makes the bankers rich.

So let them have their weapons and wars. With all due respect to those brave enough to protest, it's time for people simply to walk away and set up their own economic and monetary systems as a prelude to a rebirth of humanity as ethical beings in sustainable communities of choice.

The keys, says Greco, are simple: “Promote the establishment of private complementary exchange systems—and use them. Buy from your friends and neighbors wherever possible. Contribute your time, energy, and money to whatever moves things in the right direction.”

Greco also recommends that the unit of exchange for alternative currencies be based on the value of commodities—not necessarily gold or silver, which bankers and governments manipulate, but those commodities readily available within a trading system. State and local governments should do everything possible to protect, encourage, nourish, and participate in these systems.

The irony is that what may appear on the surface to be technical changes in how the exchange of goods and services takes place can have such profound effects. The answer is that systems of exchange reflect entirely different perceptions of the world. Bank-money exchange reflects and creates a system of elite control and human slavery. Reciprocal credit exchange reflects and creates a democratic system on a level monetary playing field.

The difference points to the fact that such reform is, above all, a spiritual endeavor. Thomas Greco has devoted decades to this quest and is one of its foremost visionaries. In an Epilogue he writes: “We will either learn to put aside sectarian differences, to recognize all life as one life, to cooperate in sharing earth's bounty, and yield control to a higher power—or we will find ourselves embroiled in ever-more destructive conflicts that will leave the planet in ruins and avail only the meanest form of existence for the few, if any, who survive.”

It's a vision we can all strive to embrace. •

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Bursting Our Bubbles, continued from page 20

And the awful truth is that they *are* irrelevant, because they are about becoming an educated, independent, creative human being – and citizen. And education is not about that, because education is not about education. No subject is about the subject itself. Math isn't even about math, and science isn't even about science. They, too, are subordinate to another cause. And the result seems to be a populace that is too unskilled and unprepared to fully enjoy and contribute to the world around it, and for whom citizenship is a far cry from the active citizenship envisioned by Thomas Paine.

How does one measure the success of an educational system that produces people who believe that small fires caused three massive buildings, on the same day, to explode and drop into their own footprints at free-fall speed? How does one measure the wisdom of a people who demand redundancy in every data system from bank statements to gas pump meters to income and expenses . . . with one exception: registering and counting votes? How does one measure the value of learning that allows a criminal conspiracy known as the Federal Reserve and a gang of thieves from Goldman Sachs to control our economy, government and armed forces, and to rob us of our common wealth?

Our ignorance is their tool. It is our knowledge that they are afraid of. "If the people were to ever find out what we have done, we would be chased down the streets and lynched." (George Bush, cited in the June, 1992 Sarah McClendon Newsletter)

The educational system has shown us scant means or encouragement to practice citizenship. We see a pink slip, jail time, or death if we practice it with any conviction. (I refer here to the likes of Sibel Edmonds, Norman Dodd, Dave Dellinger and Martin Luther King, though there are countless more.)

Maybe it was the Dadaists who started all this topsy-turvy stuff. Maybe it was Madison Avenue that refined the art of the big lie. Maybe it was Picasso. But we know who do it now: The *New York Times*, *et al*, who manufacture consent for every coup, war, con, treason, theft, hit, and cover-up that those in real power want.

Would that the teaching of "mathandscience" could do some good. With knowledge of science and a refusal to "go gentle into that good night" we would easily prevail. But until students are taught a few basic truths, I don't see a bright future for us vassals in our vassal state. Or should I say, for us free citizens in our Republic? •



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wards saying I did a really good job fielding a huge range of questions.

Number three was being invited to an evening of supporters with Ben and Jerry. It was a very interesting environment: this big room filled with all of these different ice creams for us to eat, and then having all of these people listening to Vince and me describe what this campaign was all about. I liked the spirit of it and the real feeling of solidarity among the people there.

I'm also proud of how far the accountability movement has gone. I had no idea that, a year later, I'd be writing about this issue that is still very much alive. And, I guess my next proudest moment will be when my book is published.

You've been a lawyer, an investigative reporter, a candidate for attorney general, and an author, just to name a few. Which career did you like the most? Which had the greatest impact on your life?

CD: So far, I'd say investigative journalism. The beauty of being a journalist, and especially an investigative journalist, is that you get to go places where other people don't go, find things other people don't find, and meet all sorts of people. You're after the truth. In the ideal world, I'd probably be an investigative journalist. That is probably how I'd be happiest, because I love doing it.

Do you support Vermont nonviolently seceding from the United States and becoming its own independent republic?

CD: I haven't had the time to really properly think that through. I think that we have to engage in some very creative thinking and I can only say that I just haven't studied the issue thoroughly enough to take a stand on it yet. I find a lot of *Vermont Commons* articles, however, very fascinating and well thought-through. I think they are really trying to come to grips with where our country is going. •

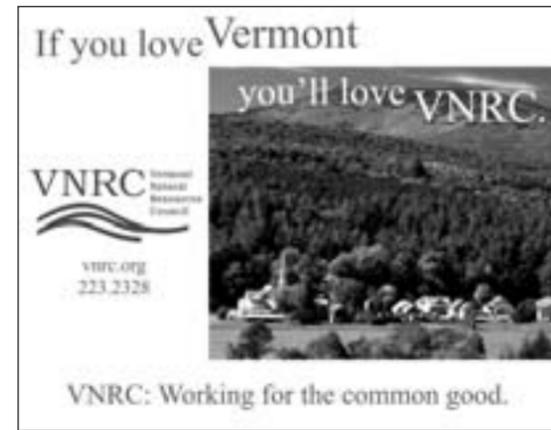


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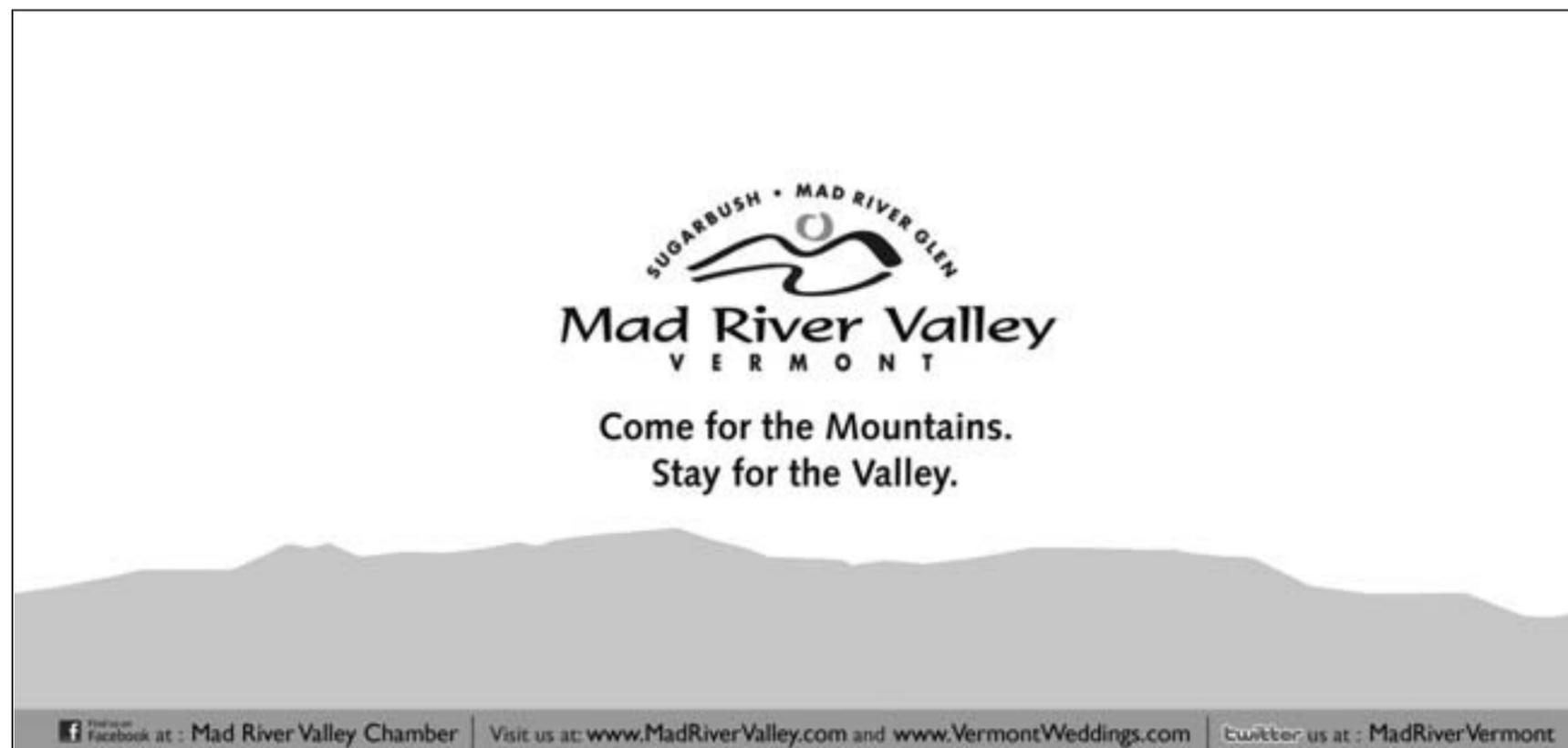


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DISPERSIONS How to Get an Independent Vermont, Starting NOW *Kirkpatrick Sale*

Let's talk about how to get an independent Vermont.

But first a small digression, to think about the practicality of the project. Philosophers have wrestled for centuries over the question of the optimum size of cities and nations, and it is a worthy enterprise, though it is safe to say that no matter how artful and accurate their solutions/projections/findings may be, the makers of cities and nations seldom pay them any heed.

Nonetheless, in my long studies on optimum sizes, I have come up with a few ranges of figures that continue to make sense if one is looking for both some minimal efficiency and

It would be a very practical project to elect people favoring an independent state, eventually creating enough representatives to bring the issue of secession to the chamber floors.

some basic representative democracy. For cities the range is between 50,000 and 100,000 people, divided into multiple districts of 5,000 to 15,000 people for direct democratic voting and election of representatives to a city-wide government. For nations the range is between 500,000 and 1 million people, again divided into smaller units of 5,000 to 15,000 people for direct democracy and between 50 and 100 districts with an average population of 10,000 for representative democracy.

You don't have to take my word for it (though the examination is described in a couple chapters of my *Human Scale*, still to be found around and available by request from New Society Publishers in British Columbia). Take the word of such people as Lao Tzu, Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Kropotkin, Chesterton, Mumford, Schumacher, and Leopold Kohr (the centenary of whose birth, by the way, is this year) – a set of people, now that I write it out, who have been as notable for their wisdom as for their having been generally ignored by the statesmen they addressed.

The reason I bring up all this esoterica is that it indicates that the state of Vermont is of a very viable size for independence and democratic government.

The population is of a size – 622,000 people, roughly – that can allow a considerable measure of democracy at the state level, where the voice of the people can actually be heard and have some influence. Taking the total number of voters in the last presidential election (about 323,000) as the general citizenry of the state, there are approximately 3,000 voters in every Representative district (2,150 voters on average for each of the 150 repre-

sentatives) and 24,800 voters in each Senate district (10,800 for each of the 30 senators).

That, folks, is not a lot of people. And assuming some group wanted to mount an effort to elect its people to the state legislature, it would not have that hard a time of it. Figure, if there are 2,150 voters for each representative, all you need to influence is 1,076 people to vote for your candidate, and, presto, you're in. And if you can't persuade a thousand people to your point of view, at least after a couple of tries, you haven't got a cause worth pursuing.

What's the point in all this electoral scheming? I'm suggesting, with all due humility as an outsider, that it would be a very practical project for people in Vermont interested in creating an independent state to elect people favoring that cause to the Statehouse, eventually creating enough representatives to bring the issue of secession to the chamber floors.

Seriously. Not rocket science. It takes some doggedness to go through all the rigamarole of the state's regulations on forming new parties, but not a whole lot of time or money. Anyone interested in being a citizen of an independent Vermont – and as soon as possible, before the collapse of the empire and its currency – should be able to handle it.

To indicate what the process is, I am quoting a state document that tells what's required (which you don't have to read unless you're serious):

In each odd-numbered year Vermont voters must organize, or re-organize, political parties at the town, county, and state levels. The following is a summary of the process.

1. The state chair of each of Vermont's parties begins the process by setting a date for town caucuses between September 10 and September 30, inclusive. The state chair's notice must be mailed to each town clerk and to each town chair at least 14 days before the date of the caucus, and must also be published in at least two newspapers having general circulation in the state. Parties must proceed to organize in towns throughout the state; to become or remain a minor party, the state party certificate must indicate that the party has organized in at least ten (10) towns.
 2. Next, the town chair warns the date, place, time, and purpose of the caucus. When there is no present chair (usually when the party has not been organized in town before, or the chair has moved to a new town), three voters of the party may take over the warning duties, with one of their number designated to perform the duties of town chair. The caucus must be held in a public place within the town. At the time set for the caucus, voters of the party in the town meet and proceed to elect a town committee to serve for the following two years or until their successors are elected.
 3. Immediately after the town committee has been elected, the first meeting of the town committee must be held. The principal responsibility of the town committee is to elect officers and to elect delegates to the county committee.
 4. Within 72 hours of the town caucus, the chair and secretary of the town committee must mail a copy of the notice calling the caucus and a certified list of names and addresses of officers and members of the town committee to (1) the secretary of state, (2) the state party chair, (3) the county party chair and (4) the town clerk. A minor party can choose not to organize at the county level, sending delegates from town committees to a state committee.
-
- Organizing is cumbersome and time-consuming, but that's because the major parties don't want anyone giving them a serious challenge.**
-
5. The county committee must then meet on a date set by the state chair (no more than 30 days after the date of the town caucus). The county committee elects its own five officers and delegates to the state committee.
 6. Within 72 hours of the first meeting of the county committee, its chair and secretary must mail a copy of the notice calling the meeting, and a certified list of the names and mailing addresses of the officers of the county committee and the delegates to the state committee, to the: (1) secretary of state, (2) county clerk and (3) chair of the state party.
 7. Not less than 15 days nor more than 30 days after the county committee meeting, the state committee must meet at a time, place, and date set by the state chair.
- Within 10 days of the first meeting of the state committee, the chair and secretary must file the certification form stating that the party has elected officers and completed its organization in at least 10 towns for minor parties in substantial compliance with the law, including all required filings.
- And that's it. Of course it's cumbersome and unnecessarily time-consuming, but that's because the major parties don't want to have anyone giving them a serious challenge and they make it as unpleasant as possible. But not unduly difficult. All it takes is a few good men, and women, aware of the urgency of the imperial crisis and the true, deep beneficiaries of living in an independent nation.
- Start now, and it'll be a breeze in 2011. •

HERE'S A THOUGHT, CHIMP: YOU HAVE OPPOSABLE THUMBS. USE THEM.

Despite their status as quite evolutionarily-inclined, the opposable thumb can only get a creature so far. We simply cannot expect the chimpanzee population to protect itself from our world's mounting environmental problems. As those most capable of protecting our planet's vast resources, it is our responsibility to do so. Because the business world relies so heavily on the Earth's natural resources, eschewing responsibility could have a drastic impact on global business. Hundreds of companies around the world are taking responsibility by joining 1% For The Planet, a growing

alliance of businesses around the world pledging one percent of their sales to nonprofit organizations that support the environment.

Becoming a member of 1% For The Planet promises that your company is making a positive impact on the planet in which we do business. Supporting members of 1% means that the purchases you make are changing the world we live in. For a complete list of member-companies you can support, or to find out more about how your company can keep Earth in business, visit onepercentfortheplanet.org.



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