In Part I of his article for Vermont Commons; Voices of Independence (Issue No. 32, Stick Season 2009), Adrian Kuzminski introduced the economic principles of Edward Kellogg (1790-1858), author of Labor and Other Capital (1849), and posthumously A New Monetary System (1861). Kellogg proposed a system of local credit banks and interest rates close to 1.1 percent. “Why 1.1 percent?” Kuzminski wrote. That rate “fairly redistributes capital and is a sustainable rate . . . that allows for replacement of resources over a lifetime while avoiding too little or too much debt.” Readers are encouraged to re-read Part I at www.vtcommons.org/journal. The article continues below.

The profound implications of Edward Kellogg’s money system, formulated by Kellogg in the Vermont Commons Number 33 | Winter 2010 Subscribe online at www.vtcommons.org VOICES OF INDEPENDENCE Vermont’s Common Assets: From Banana Republic to Sovereign Commonwealth Gary Flomenhoft

When we think about the commons, perhaps we think of the town squares of yore, such as Boston Common, which once were grazing lands for cattle. The commons may seem like an archaic term in the modern age of privatization, corporatization, and globalization, but the commons persists despite the concept being largely ignored. The air we breathe, our ozone layer, and our climate are commons, currently undergoing drastic change. Public roads, sidewalks, schools, parks, lakes, beaches, bike paths, and hiking trails are all commons. The internet is the global cyber-commons. Public museums, libraries, music, money, law, democracy, and fairy tales are all commons. We can’t exist without the natural commons, and we all benefit from the wisdom of our cultural commons of accumulated knowledge.

When we think of the commons, perhaps we think of the Enclosure Acts in England during the 14th to 18th centuries that “enclosed” the common grazing lands and turned them into private property primarily for the benefit of sheep farming and wool-making. It has become the prevailing wisdom in capitalist societies that enclosure of the commons in private ownership of all natural and social resources is the best approach.

But is this true?

It now seems apparent that unrestricted private ownership is an inefficient means of allocating resources and leads to environmental destruction, increasing inequity, speculation, and boom/bust cycles such as the recent S&L crisis, dot.com collapse, housing bust, and the ongoing Wall Street meltdown. On the other extreme, history shows that a system of total state ownership of “the means of production” is even worse.

In short, a new economic paradigm (or perhaps, the revival of an old one) is needed.

In 2006, entrepreneur Peter Barnes wrote a book entitled Capitalism 3.0, in which he proposed a new paradigm by adding an economic sector called “the Commons” sector, managed by trustees. In this paradigm, society’s common resources (the commons) are reclaimed for the public instead of privatized by corporations. Private enterprise

continued on page 8

Vermont’s Pathway Toward Economic Independence Part II

Adrian Kuzminski

In Part I of his article for Vermont Commons; Voices of Independence (Issue No. 32, Stick Season 2009), Adrian Kuzminski introduced the economic principles of Edward Kellogg (1790-1858), author of Labor and Other Capital (1849), and posthumously A New Monetary System (1861). Kellogg proposed a system of local credit banks and interest rates close to 1.1 percent. “Why 1.1 percent?” Kuzminski wrote. That rate “fairly redistributes capital and is a sustainable rate . . . that allows for replacement of resources over a lifetime while avoiding too little or too much debt.” Readers are encouraged to re-read Part I at www.vtcommons.org/journal. The article continues below.

When we think about the commons, perhaps we think of the town squares of yore, such as Boston Common, which once were grazing lands for cattle. The commons may seem like an archaic term in the modern age of privatization, corporatization, and globalization, but the commons persists despite the concept being largely ignored. The air we breathe, our ozone layer, and our climate are commons, currently undergoing drastic change. Public roads, sidewalks, schools, parks, lakes, beaches, bike paths, and hiking trails are all commons. The internet is the global cyber-commons. Public museums, libraries, music, money, law, democracy, and fairy tales are all commons. We can’t exist without the natural commons, and we all benefit from the wisdom of our cultural commons of accumulated knowledge.

When we think of the commons, perhaps we think of the Enclosure Acts in England during the 14th to 18th centuries that “enclosed” the common grazing lands and turned them into private property primarily for the benefit of sheep farming and wool-making. It has become the prevailing wisdom in capitalist societies that enclosure of the commons in private ownership of all natural and social resources is the best approach.

But is this true?

It now seems apparent that unrestricted private ownership is an inefficient means of allocating resources and leads to environmental destruction, increasing inequity, speculation, and boom/bust cycles such as the recent S&L crisis, dot.com collapse, housing bust, and the ongoing Wall Street meltdown. On the other extreme, history shows that a system of total state ownership of “the means of production” is even worse.

In short, a new economic paradigm (or perhaps, the revival of an old one) is needed.

In 2006, entrepreneur Peter Barnes wrote a book entitled Capitalism 3.0, in which he proposed a new paradigm by adding an economic sector called “the Commons” sector, managed by trustees. In this paradigm, society’s common resources (the commons) are reclaimed for the public instead of privatized by corporations. Private enterprise

continued on page 8

Vermont’s Pathway Toward Economic Independence Part II

Adrian Kuzminski

In Part I of his article for Vermont Commons; Voices of Independence (Issue No. 32, Stick Season 2009), Adrian Kuzminski introduced the economic principles of Edward Kellogg (1790-1858), author of Labor and Other Capital (1849), and posthumously A New Monetary System (1861). Kellogg proposed a system of local credit banks and interest rates close to 1.1 percent. “Why 1.1 percent?” Kuzminski wrote. That rate “fairly redistributes capital and is a sustainable rate . . . that allows for replacement of resources over a lifetime while avoiding too little or too much debt.” Readers are encouraged to re-read Part I at www.vtcommons.org/journal. The article continues below.

When we think about the commons, perhaps we think of the town squares of yore, such as Boston Common, which once were grazing lands for cattle. The commons may seem like an archaic term in the modern age of privatization, corporatization, and globalization, but the commons persists despite the concept being largely ignored. The air we breathe, our ozone layer, and our climate are commons, currently undergoing drastic change. Public roads, sidewalks, schools, parks, lakes, beaches, bike paths, and hiking trails are all commons. The internet is the global cyber-commons. Public museums, libraries, music, money, law, democracy, and fairy tales are all commons. We can’t exist without the natural commons, and we all benefit from the wisdom of our cultural commons of accumulated knowledge.

When we think of the commons, perhaps we think of the Enclosure Acts in England during the 14th to 18th centuries that “enclosed” the common grazing lands and turned them into private property primarily for the benefit of sheep farming and wool-making. It has become the prevailing wisdom in capitalist societies that enclosure of the commons in private ownership of all natural and social resources is the best approach.

But is this true?

It now seems apparent that unrestricted private ownership is an inefficient means of allocating resources and leads to environmental destruction, increasing inequity, speculation, and boom/bust cycles such as the recent S&L crisis, dot.com collapse, housing bust, and the ongoing Wall Street meltdown. On the other extreme, history shows that a system of total state ownership of “the means of production” is even worse.

In short, a new economic paradigm (or perhaps, the revival of an old one) is needed.

In 2006, entrepreneur Peter Barnes wrote a book entitled Capitalism 3.0, in which he proposed a new paradigm by adding an economic sector called “the Commons” sector, managed by trustees. In this paradigm, society’s common resources (the commons) are reclaimed for the public instead of privatized by corporations. Private enterprise

continued on page 8

Vermont’s Pathway Toward Economic Independence Part II

Adrian Kuzminski

In Part I of his article for Vermont Commons; Voices of Independence (Issue No. 32, Stick Season 2009), Adrian Kuzminski introduced the economic principles of Edward Kellogg (1790-1858), author of Labor and Other Capital (1849), and posthumously A New Monetary System (1861). Kellogg proposed a system of local credit banks and interest rates close to 1.1 percent. “Why 1.1 percent?” Kuzminski wrote. That rate “fairly redistributes capital and is a sustainable rate . . . that allows for replacement of resources over a lifetime while avoiding too little or too much debt.” Readers are encouraged to re-read Part I at www.vtcommons.org/journal. The article continues below.

When we think about the commons, perhaps we think of the town squares of yore, such as Boston Common, which once were grazing lands for cattle. The commons may seem like an archaic term in the modern age of privatization, corporatization, and globalization, but the commons persists despite the concept being largely ignored. The air we breathe, our ozone layer, and our climate are commons, currently undergoing drastic change. Public roads, sidewalks, schools, parks, lakes, beaches, bike paths, and hiking trails are all commons. The internet is the global cyber-commons. Public museums, libraries, music, money, law, democracy, and fairy tales are all commons. We can’t exist without the natural commons, and we all benefit from the wisdom of our cultural commons of accumulated knowledge.

When we think of the commons, perhaps we think of the Enclosure Acts in England during the 14th to 18th centuries that “enclosed” the common grazing lands and turned them into private property primarily for the benefit of sheep farming and wool-making. It has become the prevailing wisdom in capitalist societies that enclosure of the commons in private ownership of all natural and social resources is the best approach.

But is this true?

It now seems apparent that unrestricted private ownership is an inefficient means of allocating resources and leads to environmental destruction, increasing inequity, speculation, and boom/bust cycles such as the recent S&L crisis, dot.com collapse, housing bust, and the ongoing Wall Street meltdown. On the other extreme, history shows that a system of total state ownership of “the means of production” is even worse.

In short, a new economic paradigm (or perhaps, the revival of an old one) is needed.

In 2006, entrepreneur Peter Barnes wrote a book entitled Capitalism 3.0, in which he proposed a new paradigm by adding an economic sector called “the Commons” sector, managed by trustees. In this paradigm, society’s common resources (the commons) are reclaimed for the public instead of privatized by corporations. Private enterprise

continued on page 8
We are at the outset of the greatest social crisis of my lifetime. (I was born on the eve of World War II.) How we choose to respond, now, to this national and global crisis will determine if we wither or we thrive anew here in Vermont.

The crisis, described by most as a near-global “recession” – a term that was conjured up after WWII to replace the former more-honest term, “depression” – is far deeper and broader than a mere recession, or depression. None of us will part from it unchanged. To be reborn, we must first die.

Manifesting first as a crisis of confidence, then of faith, it will soon become a crisis of belief. More is involved than capitalism, representative democracy, freedom of markets, perceptual material growth for all, and the supremacy of the individual self. This is a crisis of cultural identity. Who am I? What gives my life meaning? What kind of society do I want? To whom do I owe my loyalty? What, where is my homeland?

The crisis has been precipitated by bitter truths still debated, denied, and ignored. As climate activist Adam Sacks has wisely observed, “Bitter climate truths are fundamentally bitter cultural truths.” The exact same words could be spoken in relation to Peak Oil, or to the military-industrial-Congressional complex.

The human world is at last discovering its limits. Not its spiritual or intellectual limits, which are more or less boundless, but its material limits. Most of the world’s people live in nations that are at the beginning of their ascent into the Dream of the Imperial West. They are furiously, mortally engaged in the West’s game of fossil-fuel-based growth, and they are growing fast. And so we are all now arrived at the “bumpy plateau” of Peak Oil, Hubbert’s infamous peak, where the world’s demand for oil keeps growing but the supply does not. And, as a result of the uncertainty over the supplies of the world’s most precious and indispensable commodity – its “keystone” resource – the price bumps up and down until we reach the fateful downslope.

On this bumpy plateau we have very little time to answer life-and-death questions, existential questions, and make huge new commitments as to how we are going to live in the future. The globalized system’s tipping point has arrived.

“We’re on a journey — and we don’t yet know it — back to a nation of communities where your character really matters, and where character rests on whether your deeds comport with truthfulness … [where] the estranged spirits of our national character await a reunion with us: fortitude, patience, generosity, humor.” (James H. Kunstler). We are about to be transformed from what Chris Hedges calls “a country of child-like adults” into mature human beings. This is the fruit we may hope for.

to preserve for themselves a moribund “American Way of Life.” This not a situation you and I can control: these are tectonic plates moving inexorably on a collision course.

These plates are nonetheless human: belief moves them. Belief in the god of eternal economic growth. A jealous god whose reign now spans our planet.

We come to the heart of the matter: Do you believe in this god? If you remain faithful to the god, you will continue to pledge your allegiance to the United States of America. You will swallow the lies, the abuse, the legiurdeemien served daily to you by these “leaders” and their servants in the media, and you, your sons, and your daughters will

continue to die in far-away lands with nary a trace nor murmur of protest. Because that is what your country’s zero-sum, full-spectrum-dominance philosophy means and entails.

I believe this god is dying — in his death agony. I believe allegiance to this god is now a fool’s bargain. And a bargain with the devil to boot.

Vermont Commons will continue its mission to liberate our social imaginations, to develop our readers’ will to engage in innovation, and do the continued on page 25
Introducing iCan
Think different, but not that different.

Vermont Commons welcomes your input.
Please e-mail letters to editor@vtcommons.org or post to PO Box 1121, Waitsfield, Vermont 05673. Although we will try to print your letters in their entirety, we may edit to fit. Please be concise. Be sure to include your contact information (name, address, telephone, and e-mail) for verification purposes.

Letters to the Editor

AN INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE, FOR ACTUAL INDEPENDENCE

Editor, Vermont Commons:

My name is Robert Wagner and I’m running for the Vermont Senate from Addison County.

I’ve gotten a lot of inspiration from your paper since I discovered it a year ago. Economic re-localization, transition towns, post-Peak Oil – all necessary fare in a Vermont that is just waking up to some harsh global facts.

Here is my platform. The details I am filling in as I pound the pavements (and the mud) all over Addison County, listening to all of you and taking my notes. I will be bothering as many of you as possible personally over the next weeks and months to sign my petition to represent you in the Vermont Senate from Addison County.

1. NO further Vermont support for war, torture, or deployment of the Vermont National Guard. Order the Guard home now.

2. NOT a dime more for Wall Street. Invest Vermont funds in Vermont small banks and credit unions for lending here at home.


4. Start the discussion with all Vermonters RE returning our state to the status of a free Independent Republic, as we once were, maintaining free trade and good relations with all other nations of the world.

Does No. 4 shock you? I had a hard time with it as well. Finally I woke up and realized that within the context of an unfixable empire that has lost its moral authority Nos. 1, 2 & 3 are not possible. With No. 4, we have a chance to survive the coming Collapse, build a new, stronger economy which is both localized and global, through free trade.

Besides listening to you, I’ll be spending 2010 tending to my small crops, doing the chores, my day job, and hopefully paying the mortgage on time. I’m well aware of how many of you are challenged by how expensive it is just to live. This challenge keeps me up nights as well. And now, with service cuts all over Vermont, thanks to a legislature that won’t go after big corporations for the value that they are extracting from Vermont practically tax-free, the challenge has grown.

Leadership is not management; we already have great managers at the town level. Leadership raises
In his 2000 book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, author Robert Putnam ranked Vermont above all other states on his scale of “tolerance for gender, racial, and civil liberties.” At about the same time, political scientist Tom Rice ranked Vermont first among states on a “civil society” measure published in *Publius*, the leading professional journal of American federalism.

Such rankings are not new. Praise for Vermont’s unique civic virtue has been extensively documented. Vermont is an exceptional place regarding values most dear to those who appreciate human-kind’s need for a living nexus between liberty and community. (See Figure I)

Why is this?

The answer is critical to all those patriots committed to navigating Vermont’s independence from the federal government. The answer rationalizes our instincts, electrifies our commitment, and sustains our courage. The answer lies deep in our sinews, our genetic code. Established by the Republic of Vermont in 1777, it arose from the first English constitution to outlaw slavery and to allow people without property to vote. The code was evident when Ethan Allen issued America’s first Emancipation Proclamation – a “writ of freedom” for two African Americans (mother and daughter) found at Fort Ticonderoga, when it was captured by Allen in 1775 while gunfight from Lexington and Concord still echoed through the hardwood hills of northern New England. The code was recognized a year later by General John Burgoyne, who wrote in his diary while sailing down Lake Champlain to defeat at a place called Saratoga: “Vermont abounds with the most rebellious race on the continent and hangs like a gathering storm on my left.”

This genetic code is called human-scale democracy.

But how was this code sustained over the two centuries that have since passed? How did it survive the second half of the industrial revolution – the two most vicious centuries the world has ever known, ending with the hierarchical, totalitarian industrial horrors of Hitler and Stalin?

Vermont escaped hierarchy and its attendant authoritarianism because of geography and climate. We were born cold, rocky, and isolated (the only New England state without an opening to the sea). The historian Arnold Toynbee, in his *Study of History*, dismissed Vermont as being above the optimal climatic area of the continent.

He had a point.

During the heyday of urban industrialism, no American state had more people scrambling to leave than Vermont. This period is called Vermont’s “dark age” by historians. In 1950, Vermont was the most rural state in America. We had a tiny state capital, the population of our largest city was less than 35,000, and a greater percent-age of Vermont’s citizens lived in places of fewer than 2,500 people than any other state.

Vermont had been “left behind.” This turned out to be a blessing.

The ascendant paradigm

At about 10 p.m. on a Saturday evening during the summer of 1973, I was hitchhiking through a particularly lonely stretch of Vermont between Barre and Bradford, a little town on the Connecticut River. The blacktop followed the Waits River, which was dancing along beside me under a full moon. I had just sent the manuscript for my first book on Vermont’s government to the publisher. It contained an introductory chapter on the history of the state. I was unhappy with it. My broodings centered on my lack of a (Frederick Jackson Turner-like) paradigm summarizing the state’s history. How to describe Vermont’s past in a way that would enlighten its future? What was our genetic code?

At the same time that one side of my brain was caught up in this thematic enterprise, the other side was wondering about strange roars coming out of the hills to the southwest. They undulated with intensity – deep, guttural groans and bellows. It couldn’t be thunder, the skies were clear. They competed for my attention with historical paradigms as I walked alone down the road beside the river.

Then it struck me. The sounds came from a dirt race track, the Bear Ridge Speedway near Bradford. It featured small cars and big engines tearing around and around a quarter-mile oval. Thinking about that, the idea of the “lapped car” crept into my mind. Every such race seems to have a car so slow it is left far behind. But soon, as it passes in front of the grandstand, it is indeed, ahead. The other cars are behind it. It is out in front – leading the pack.

Suddenly back in the present, the other side of my mind – the side fusing over a paradigm for Vermont – kicked in.

The epiphany struck.

Throughout the urban industrial revolution, Vermont had fallen so far behind the other states on the great America racetrack of “progress” that it had been lapped. And now, by damn, it was ahead! Years later, in a little book of Vermont humor entitled *The Vermont Owner’s Manual*, Bill Mares and I put it this way:

“When you (citizens) own Vermont, you own something very special. Sometimes Vermonters lose sight of this. That’s easy to understand. Mass American urban culture has bombarded us with big and fast and rich for so long that it is easy to believe we have fallen so far behind we’ll never catch up.

---

Vermont dropped so far behind the rest of America on the racetrack of progress

we’ve been lapped. Now we’re ahead!

---

continued on following page
continued from previous page

“Guess what?”
“We did. We won’t. And who cares?”
“We dropped so far behind the rest of America on the racetrack of progress we’ve been lapped. NOW WE’RE AHEAD.”

In a more serious treatment of Vermont as a model for other American states, published for a national audience some 15 years later (The Vermont Papers: Recreating Democracy on a Human Scale) John McLaughry and I switched metaphors to explain what we called the “leapfrog theory.”

“Vermont never had what most Americans are longing to be rid of. [We] developed a unique set of historical circumstances that pivot around one critical event: the state leapfrogged urban-industrialism, ignoring the astounding transformation of American society that took place in the years between 1830 and 1960. The result is a state that is already free and clear of the twentieth century.”

In short, the Dark Age “cocooned” Vermont. When the state entered the post-war period, it did so with its land green, its civil society preserved, its communities small, its democracy secure. Most important, its human-scale karma, its genetic code (while worn and tattered here and there), is still fundamentally intact. Vermont was the United States’ best civil society because the variables that shaped it originally survived the 20th century.

Key to a proper understanding of this hopeful possibility is the realization that Vermont’s intellectual and creative contributions were ahead of the curve during the urban industrial period. While limited space precludes here a complete documentation of this remarkable claim, it does allow three examples. The two most important inventions of the second industrial revolution – the electric motor (which allowed Americans to make things with electricity instead of water and steam) and the platform scale (which allowed Americans to sell things by weight rather than bulk) – were Vermont inventions. And our most famous industry, the machine tool industry, built the cutting tools that made the machines that made the urban-industrial revolution. The analogy is not far off: then, as now, we built the “computer chips” of the second wave.

Urban-based biases to the contrary notwithstanding, rural people used, appreciated, and understood technology more than urban people. And no state was as rural as Vermont. The division of labor (a defining feature of the urban industrial revolution) imprints (as Marx warned) human genius and creativity. Vermont had plenty of industry throughout the Dark Age but all of it was practiced in what by national standards were tiny establishments and firms. The size and mass of industrialism as practiced nearly everywhere else was its most pernicious characteristic, and Vermont was relatively free of it.

Civil society and the new paradigm

Computerized electronic intelligence (from town and county planning models to robotic milk-milking machines) will define the new age of human activity just as speedy transportation and production systems (from assembly line work-processing models to the automobiles and trolley cars they produced) defined the old. Moreover, strange as it may seem to those locked in the “urban-first” mentality, Vermont, and other similar places, will lead in the development of this new age.

Here’s why. First, the notion of “distance and space” has been profoundly reversed. Rural places like Vermont are now advantaged by post-modern electronic technology in the same way cities were once advantaged by machine-age technology. Second, Vermont is free of the residues of the old system, and may therefore immediately apply its energy to creating the future, while the rest of America must first expend its energy cleaning up after the past. In short, rural places are generally receptive, urban places are generically reactive, to the coming reality.

One needs only look at the dramatic increase in “working at home” statistics and the like to appreciate this. And we are only on the threshold of this new age – the “third wave” as it is called. For instance, we now have the capacity (interactive, holographic, visual communication combined with robotic production devices) to allow me to build cars in Detroit from my converted deer camp home in the hills of Vermont where I am now writing these words. And I would have had this article done sooner if I had not the capacity to play poker online in real time, for real money with players from Sidney, Australia, to Moose Jaw, Alaska.

But even these capacities are the Model A Fords of the new wave. Could Clyde Barrow in his V-8 coup – which he claimed in a letter to Henry Ford was the best getaway car he’d ever stolen – have in his wildest fantasies imagined a car equipped with a voice in the dash that could direct him, turn-by-turn, to the exact location of the next bank? Decentralist revolutionaries must think past the embryonic phenomena we now think are the epitome of technology, and look toward the horizons of possibility, a direction in which the electronic highway is surely leading.

Let us view this horizon in political terms. The concentration of socio-economic life, which was necessary to sustain the urban-industrial era, relied on hierarchy – the classic 20th century pyramid of roles and duties arranged to control organizational activity from the top down. Hierarchy requires authority, which promotes symmetry, which causes rigidity. The result is awkward, reactionary and (most important) insensitive – and thus inhuman. (See Figure II)

The new model features a diffusion of life and the politics and governance which follow. Instead of a single (hierarchical) directive, this de-concentration will engender a network of interactions. Instead of authoritarian directives, democratic decisions from the bottom up will result. Instead of a symmetrical and rigid master plan, a variety of innovative systems will appear, serving in addition, as laboratories through which the networks can self-adjust with time. These systems will be sensitive to the special needs of citizens in the variety of settings in which they live, and thus become humane.

Herein lies the future of the world. And it is hard to name many polities around the globe that are better situated to lead the way toward its most humane promise than the Republic of Vermont. But to make any of this happen, we must first arrest the erosion of power toward the center, a center which remains hidebound and handcuffed by the idiocies of a time long past. •

FIGURE 2: Lapped – The Leapfrog Paradigm. FRANK BRYAN 2002

Vermont’s Possibility

The Traditional Dynamic

Rural Agrarian → Urban Industrial → Techno-Post Modern

CONCENTRATION → requires
HIERARCHY → requires
AUTHORITY → promotes
SYMMETRY → stimulates
RIGIDITY → begets
INHUMANITY → supports

DIFFUSION → allows
NETWORKS → require
DEMOCRACY → promotes
VARIETY → stimulates
INNOVATION → begets
HUMANITY → supports

A “MARKETPLACE” POLITICS → A HUMAN SCALE POLITICS
Localvore Living: Fermenting Independence—An Ancient Food-Preservation Technique Makes a Comeback in Vermont  Robin McDermott

Even if you are a chronic procrastinator living off the grid without a root cellar, there is still time to preserve some food for this winter and it doesn’t require energy inputs or special equipment. All you need is some of the least expensive of all local vegetables – cabbage and/or root vegetables – and it is likely that you will find these in ample supply at one of the many winter farmers’ markets throughout the state. The preservation technique, fermentation, is the oldest of them all and is the only storage method that yields a healthier result than the sum of its separate ingredients.

On November 30, “Fermentation Fetishist” and author of Wild Fermentation Sandor Katz held a workshop in the Mad River Valley and inspired 25 Localvores to go home and start experimenting with their own creative mixtures of grated or chopped vegetables and salt. During the workshop, “Sandorkraut,” as Katz sometimes calls himself, took the mystery out of turning a pile of thinly sliced cabbage into sauerkraut and showed how by adding a few more vegetables like radishes, turnips, celeriac, and carrots plus some garlic, ginger, and hot pepper to the mix, you end up with the national pickle of Korea, kimchi. While his book and website offer specific recipes with weights and measures of the various ingredients, he assembled his sample concoction of fermented vegetables by eye—adding more carrot or red radish to make the mixture visually appealing and by liberally mixing in salt to taste.

Fermenting vegetables is an anaerobic process where the vegetables are submerged under a brine solution (water and salt) and allowed to stand at room temperature for period of time – usually days to weeks. In the case of sauerkraut and kimchi, the vegetables are cut or shredded (your choice, and you could do some each way) and then massaged with salt. The salt draws water out of the cells, making the vegetables crunchy while at the same time producing the briny liquid that will cover them during the fermentation process.

As the vegetables sit at room temperature under the brine liquid, the natural bacteria on the vegetables, or lactobacilli, converts the sugars and starches into lactic acid, a natural preservative. An additional value of the fermentation process is that it pre-digests many of the complex nutrients in the vegetables or whatever is fermenting, making them easier for our bodies to access and use. Fermentation also creates new nutrients including Vitamin C, several different B vitamins, Omega-3 fatty acids, and antioxidants, while removing naturally occurring toxins in foods.

The 18th century explorer Captain James Cook effectively eliminated the deadly disease of scurvy on board his ships by feeding his crews large quantities of sauerkraut that was rich in vitamin C naturally produced during the fermentation process.

Does the idea of eating vegetables that have been bubbling away on your counter for a couple of weeks make you a little queasy? Well consider, as Katz pointed out in the workshop, that just about anything you find in a gourmet food store has gone through a similar fermentation process. Cheeses are, at their essence, fermented milk and, like sauerkraut production, the process of making cheese takes a natural product with a short shelf life and preserves it. Likewise, continued on following page
Making Sauerkraut

Sandor Katz encourages people to experiment and taste the vegetables while they are being prepped to determine if the right amount of salt has been used. However, it helps for beginners to start with a basic ratio of vegetables to salt, since too little salt might not prevent the vegetables from rotting before the fermentation process starts and too much may completely prevent fermentation from taking place. A good rule of thumb is five pounds of cabbage to three tablespoons of salt. Be sure to use sea salt or pickling salt, as table salt has been stripped of many minerals and has iodine and anti-caking agents.

For sauerkraut, the cabbage should be sliced or shredded thinly and tossed with the salt in a large bowl. At first, the amount of cabbage may seem overwhelming – be prepared with a really big bowl! However, as the water is drawn out of the cabbage, it will shrink to a fraction of its initial volume. I like to sprinkle the salt on the cabbage, massage it in, and then let it sit for a half hour or so to “get the juices flowing” so to speak. You will notice water starting to accumulate at the bottom of the bowl, but you need enough of these juices so that when you pack the cabbage into a fermentation vessel (a.k.a., a mason jar) the liquid will cover the vegetables. The only way to produce this much liquid is to literally beat it out of the cabbage by pounding it with a heavy instrument such as a meat pounder or a rubber mallet; the end of a French rolling pin also works well. Alternatively you can continue to give the cabbage a vigorous massage, working the salt in and the liquid out of the cells.

After you have produced a generous amount of liquid, it’s time to pack the cabbage into a mason jar. As you load the jar, compress the cabbage with your fist to make sure that there is enough liquid to keep the cabbage completely submerged. You will be surprised at how much cabbage you can pack into a one-quart mason jar, and need to keep that in mind as you are serving the sauerkraut; a single quart jar can provide sauerkraut for several meals. If there is not enough liquid to cover the cabbage, you have not coaxed enough liquid from the cells. Put the cabbage back into the bowl and keep working it until there is more liquid. When you pack the cabbage into the jar, it helps to allow an inch to an inch and a half of headspace in the jar because as the fermentation process progresses the liquid will start to overflow the jar.

Now you want to make sure that the fermentation process is anaerobic, which means reducing the possibility of air getting to the vegetables. Katz suggests simply using a canning jar lid to keep the air out, but cautions that because carbon dioxide is a by-product of the fermentation process, at least once a day you need to open the top to let the built-up CO₂ out. Otherwise you risk the jar exploding – remember the stuff in the jar is alive!

Start tasting the sauerkraut after three or four days. You should notice that it has started to transform itself from salty cabbage to tangy sauerkraut. When the transformation is complete is up to you. I typically let my cabbage ferment for two weeks when I make it during the colder months. When you are happy with the flavor, put the jar into the refrigerator and the fermentation process will be slowed to practically nothing. You can also store the sauerkraut in your larder or root cellar. The colder the temperature, the slower the fermentation process. Sauerkrat can keep for two or three years if the fermentation process is kept in check.

NOTE: The workshop was sponsored by Katz’s publisher, Chelsea Green, and was filmed by documentary filmmaker Ed Dooley for use on the Chelsea Green website and for promotional purposes. Katz’s website, www.wildfermentation.com, has several recipes and additional information on fermentation techniques.
It has become the prevailing wisdom in capitalist societies that enclosure of the commons in private ownership is the best approach. But is this true?

is no reason Vermont cannot have a sovereign wealth fund supported by its common assets.

Common assets are parts of the commons that have market value. They take two forms: natural assets and socially created assets. Natural assets consist of those parts of nature that no human being may rightly take claim for creating. These include fossil fuels like oil, coal and natural gas, minerals like gold, silver, platinum, uranium, public forests, electromagnetic broadcast spectrum, water, the atmosphere, etc. Socially created assets include all those things created by society as a whole which once again, no individual can possibly take credit for. These include the stock market, monetary system, internet, land values, etc. Every state has a basket of common assets equally or more valuable than Alaskan oil. Most of them have been privatized.

Property rights to some common assets are already owned by the public, but others are not. To take but one example, the electromagnetic broadcast spectrum, if it were leased annually instead of auctioned off, would be worth approximately $782 billion per year as of 2002 in the United States. The public already has rights to this spectrum through the congressionally passed Federal Communication Act of 1934.

Liquidity of the financial markets is a socially created asset worth about $51.2 trillion in the United States. Federal Reserve system banks have privatized seigniorage (the right to create money) to the tune of about $8 trillion per year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSET</th>
<th>CURRENT REVENUE</th>
<th>NEW REVENUE</th>
<th>INCREASE</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MILLION $</td>
<td>MILLION $</td>
<td>MILLION $</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air/transport</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>7-153</td>
<td>7-153</td>
<td>carbon permits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air/heating</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4-93.6</td>
<td>4-93.6</td>
<td>carbon permits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air (total)</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>carbon permits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish and wildlife</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forests</td>
<td>Net loss</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>depletion fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground water</td>
<td>~0</td>
<td>107.9</td>
<td>107.9</td>
<td>bottlers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>~0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>ISPs &amp; domains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spectrum</td>
<td>~0</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>Auction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minerals</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Royalties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface Water</td>
<td>~0</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>user fee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>1071</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>land rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wind</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>progressive rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speculation *</td>
<td>(capital gains?)</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>.25% Tobin tax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seignorage *</td>
<td>~0</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>1% of loans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total new revenue</td>
<td>~0</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per capita Dividend</td>
<td>~0</td>
<td>$1.229 billion/year</td>
<td>$1972 each/year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Credit: Gary Flomenhoft

*continued on page 23
The police department is one of Bloomington, Indiana’s most fuel-intensive departments, according to a new report from the city’s Peak Oil Task Force. In a coming era of expected oil shortages and wild oil-price volatility, they say, crime rates are likely to rise, at the same time that it becomes more difficult to fuel the police cars. Consequently, the Task Force recommends that the department add more bicycles, Segways, and motorcycles, and change most of its patrol car fleet to electric vehicles.

In October, the Peak Oil Task Force in Bloomington released its report, Redefining Prosperity: Energy Descent and Community Resilience. While not produced by an official Transition Town organization, the report is very much like one of the 12 ingredients of Transition Towns, the “energy descent action plan,” or EDAP.

Dave Rollo, a member of the Bloomington City Council and chair of the Task Force, explained the motivation for creating the task force: “We are tremendously vulnerable to energy supply disruption and price volatility if peak [oil production] comes soon. Preparing for the peak not only promises to save citizens money, but gives us the collective opportunity to make a great community even stronger.”

The Task Force report weighs in at a hefty 245 pages, and it covers the broad economic impacts of peak oil; municipal services like water, police, fire, and buildings; land use and housing, and how they interact with transportation; sustainability issues of food, water, waste, and health care; and opportunities for citizens to act.

While a different individual was responsible for each section of the report, it’s notable for not getting locked into silos. For example, the task force was apparently concerned that the electric patrol cars they recommended might be too slow for high-speed chases, so they suggest that city streets be redesigned to make it difficult for any car to travel faster than 35 mph. The redesign would have the added benefit, they say, of encouraging the transition away from cars to walking, bicycling, and other forms of transportation.

Redefining Prosperity also has a flexible vision of how people will define their needs in the future. Oil shortages and prices may stop the long-distance food imports that fill most Bloomington plates. After noting that there’s not enough agricultural land in the county to feed the county’s population using standard agricultural methods, they examine the potential of labor-intensive cultivation of small plots. With this different method of production, they find enough green space within the city to feed the city’s population on a “basic, albeit mostly vegetarian, diet.”

The closest thing I’m aware of in Vermont to Bloomington’s Redefining Prosperity is the enVision Montpelier process. Montpelier’s planning commission is now incorporating into its new Master Plan ideas the community has generated for a 30- to 100-year plan for sustainability.

There has been a narrower focus on energy sustainability in the town plan in Waterbury, where the planning commission asked the town energy committee (Local Energy Action Partnership, or LEAP) to draft energy-related language, according to LEAP co-founder Keith Thompson. Thompson says that LEAP provided goals and objectives to the planning commission, which is about to revisit the town plan language.

Writing an EDAP is a different sort of Transition work from planting edible public landscapes or installing wood stoves. It results in no immediate, visible changes, other than the existence of the document itself. However, it gives a road map of the way ahead and provides a yardstick for Transition Towns to measure their efforts. Bloomington’s Redefining Prosperity is a good example to read while working on your town’s master-plan revision or full-blown EDAP •

References


Crosslots: “I Pledge Allegiance . . . Sort of”  Will Lindner

You mean they still haven’t ruled on this? Circumstances recently led me to an elementary school hallway, where by chance I overheard a chorus of young, bored voices reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. My Pledge days are long past, so truthfully it wasn’t a bad memory, just as youth isn’t a bad memory. It struck me as kind of quaint (you know, like the Geneva Conventions against torture) – until I remembered what was coming. And sure enough, there it was: “under God.”

Every once in a while some brave soul risks the wrath of his Fox News neighbors and challenges those two words on a civil liberties basis. Yet the U.S. Supreme Cowards invariably find a way to duck the constitutional issue; a few years ago the justices sniffed that the divorced father had no legal standing to bring the case because he didn’t live with the child. Or something.

Thus, on this recent morning there wafted through the hallway those archaic words, “under God.”

There’s an adage that holds that if you want something done right you have to do it yourself. So in the absence of guidance from the Supreme Court, I’ll do the heavy lifting, examining the issues of faith and freedom relative to the Pledge of Allegiance. But since the Pledge is 117 years old, it might be best to look at the whole thing and see how it’s holding up.

Here goes. Hand over heart, eyes on the flag dangling from the funeral home across the street:

“I pledge allegiance…”

Uh-oh. Trouble already. The whole “pledging” thing gives me the willies. I’ll pledge when the Firefighters’ Benevolent Association calls me for a donation, because I’m comfortable that the firefighters won’t do anything reprehensible in the next week before I pay up. But pledging should never be taken lightly – especially when it’s combined with . . . “allegiance.”

It’s not that I’m averse to commitments. After all, I have a dog. However, “allegiance” is related to “ally,” which implies a mutual promise of fealty between two or more entities. Like other Americans of a certain age, I’ve been around the block a few times with our national “leaders,” so if they constitute one entity and I constitute the other, I perforce approach the association with disquiet. If there is pledging to be done, I want some wiggle room. I therefore offer compromise language. Rather than “I pledge allegiance,” let me suggest: “I fully anticipate a continued, positive relationship with…”

Now then, where were we? “…to the flag of the United States of America.”

Wait! To the flag? Or to “the United States of America”? They’re not the same thing. Flags are symbols, subject to evolutionary shifts in meaning or even willful cooptation by bad guys. The swastika was around for 3,000 years and had generally benign connotations related to good luck and prosperity before you-know-who commandeered it.

Symbols, and governments, go awry. What if the unimaginable happened – for example, the U.S. Supreme Court going bonkers and handing a presidential election to someone who hadn’t won it? (A preposterous hypothetical, I realize.) Suddenly the country is commanded by a person who is beholden not to the process by which we’re supposed to elect leaders, but to forces that manipulated that process. And the flag – the symbol of the country – is in that person’s hands?

Sounds risky to me. I’d say we’re better off skipping “to the flag of” altogether and pledging – or rather, indicating – our allegiance to each other, as citizens of . . . well, I would prefer of Vermont, but this is a national (ugh) pledge we’re contemplating.

So, continuing: “…and to the republic for which it stands,”

No problem there (except for the minor difficulty that I just eliminated the “it” in that phrase – “it” being the flag).

“One nation…”

Candidate John Edwards posited in 2008 that there were actually two nations within the U.S., vastly unequal in terms of economic justice and opportunity. I’d say he was putting a good face on things by leaving it at two.

“Under God…”

The very nut of the problem. And why, by the way, is it easier to add incursions on church-state separation than to take them away? Those who advocate leaving “under God” in the Pledge cite longstanding practices like convening the Supreme Court with a religious oath and printing “In God We Trust” on currency. But I remember learning the Pledge without “under God,” and how my tiny classmates and I would get out of rhythm as some remembered to add it and others (particularly Bobby Warfield) forgot, dissolving into giggles.

I say get rid of this new-fangled clause and go back to the traditional version. If we want secular governments in the Middle East (except Israel), it ought to be good enough for us as well.

“…indivisible…”

Meaning, “Killington, you may migrate to New Hampshire if you can figure out how, but you’ve got to stay in the U.S. If you think we’re kidding, just ask South Carolina.”

“Killington, you may migrate to New Hampshire if you can figure out how, but you’ve got to stay in the U.S. If you think we’re kidding, just ask South Carolina.”
Vermont Vox Populi: Combating Climate Change Through Commercial Collaboration: An Interview With ‘1% For The Planet’ Executive Director Terry Kellogg

Rob Williams

So I’m a musician, and I first found out about 1% For The Planet through the music of Josh Ritter, who recently played at the University of Vermont. Describe for our readers your organization’s mission.

Terry Kellogg: 1% for the Planet exists to build and support an alliance of businesses financially committed to creating a healthy planet. Our organization was started by Yvon Chouinard, founder of Patagonia, and his fishing buddy Craig Mathews, founder of Blue Ribbon Flies, in 2002. The two of them are quite the pair. They tell this story about how they realized every time they did something good for the environment it was good for their business; that companies had a role to play in protecting the planet; and that more of them should.

So what’s happened with 1% over the past seven years since your founding?

TK: Today, over 1,100 companies in 38 countries give 1 percent of their sales directly to environmental causes under the 1% umbrella. More than $50 million has been donated.

That’s a big and encouraging number. I notice that 1% for the Planet recently relocated from Massachusetts to Vermont. Why the move?

TK: Our membership and marketing is global, so frankly, we probably could have located ourselves anywhere. We moved here principally for the quality of life, but Vermont’s extraordinary commitment to and progress on principles of sustainability have made it a perfect home for the organization. We have access to tremendous talent in the labor market, and we are inspired and supported by the many forward-thinking people, businesses, and institutions in the state.

So back to music for a minute. Explain the genesis of this 1% musical project.

TK: We realize the power artists have to inspire. Jack Johnson was our fiftieth 1% member; when he traveled on his “In Between Dreams” tour we watched the phone ring off the hook, town-by-town, as he traveled around the world playing and sharing his sustainability message. Music rallies artists, fans, companies and nonprofits together; fans listen to an artist’s music and are inspired to get involved themselves. The music compilation is an easy way to make a difference for anyone who loves good music.

How did you convince all of these fabulous artists, including our Vermont neighbor Grace Potter and the Nocturnals, to donate a song to the project?

TK: The artists are amazing. Not only did they give their time and talent to make great music, most of them gave us a rare or exclusive track in support of the planet. That makes it all the more special because you cannot find the music anywhere else. “Convincing them” was a pleasure. Actually, the artists have been really excited about the project from the beginning. Their passion is infectious. We’re launching a viral media campaign around the music and part of it includes an online site where artists talk about why they support the environment and why they got involved in the 1% project.

Here are a couple of sample quotations, both substantive and humorous:

“I’ve been so blessed to make a living through making music,” says performer G.Love, “and anytime my music can help an organization like 1% for the Planet help the earth, the environment, and the people who live on it, then it’s a good day.”

continued on page 12
Vermont Vox Populi, continued from page 11

And one of our favorites, from a group called Spring Standards: “Slacker musicians aren’t in as good a position to help out the planet as, say, a really smart scientist. But I’m pretty sure that a compilation of songs by really smart scientists would suck, so we’re doing what we can to help out and hope everyone else does the same.”

That’s pretty funny. Where do you hope this musical project will go?

TK: The 1% Music project has been a labor of love from the beginning. We hope it will send the message of 1% for the Planet, and the NGOs we support, all over the world. 1%: The Music makes it easy to help the planet. Individuals can share the music online via a 1% Music widget with their friends, family and colleagues, and increase giving exponentially by sharing. For every album purchased as a result of their sharing, proceeds come back to 1%.

1% nonprofits – and there are more than 1,800 globally – can use 1% Music as a fundraiser. It’s no cost to them, and any participating nonprofit gets $5 from each album sold for their organization.

1% member companies can use 1% Music to demonstrate their partnership with 1% for the Planet and to tell the story in their words, to their customers and employees and partners. They can be role models to other businesses to roll up their sleeves and get involved.

Artists involved, many of them 1% members and all of them with an environmental stance, can use their talent to inspire others. We hope to build a community of artists and like-minded supporters who care about the planet and act to preserve it. 1% can become a place to discover cool new music; artists can be a part of 1% and have an outlet for their passion around sustainability and a way to come together with other artists to spread the word.

This sounds like a “win-win” all around. Where can interested listeners pick up a copy of the 1%, The Music CD?

TK: In keeping with its sustainability focus, 1%, The Music is an all-digital release. Distribution and promotion for 1% Music will be online and offline, grassroots and mainstream. Listeners can go to music.onepercentfortheplanet.org to buy the album and learn more about the artists and 1% for the Planet. There’s a great film clip on the site, too, of Emmett Malloy and Jack Johnson talking about why they joined 1%. It will also be available on Amazon, iTunes, eMusic, Rhapsody, and nearly 100 other online digital music sites. Starting now, 1% member companies like Patagonia and traditional music retailers, will also carry eco-friendly download cards. These cards enable buyers to go online, input a code, and download great music.

You’ve been in Vermont almost two years. How have Vermont businesses responded to the 1% “Call To Action” thus far?

TK: Vermont businesses are not going to know what’s hit them! After winning the Greenest Float in the Warren Fourth of July parade, 1% is well-positioned in the Mad River Valley and in the state to encourage participation of any sustainably minded business. Our message is generating lots of interest and inquiry. And we’ll issue the challenge to all businesses here: Let’s make Vermont the best-represented state in the 1% network.

California is in the lead today with 257. Vermont currently has six. 2010 is our year!

Sounds like a great challenge for all Vermont businesses. Good luck in your 1% efforts this year.

TK: Thanks, and keep an eye out for the music •.

Calling All Vermont Musicians!

Send Us Your Music!
Energy Optimist: Energy Crisis, Energy Opportunities  Gaelan Brown

Our world is in the midst of an endless list of crisis scenarios related to politics, the economy, credit, the environment, health care, security, human rights, energy, water, food, and the list goes on and on. Yet there is some reason for optimism, particularly related to our potential to transition to sustainable and clean energy systems. The world needs sustainable, decentralized clean energy as a foundation upon which communities can build sustainable, decentralized and strong economies.

Vermont’s economic and political independence will increase in direct correlation to how well we develop the foundation of our economy: sustainable, domestic energy.

Unfortunately the only real progress for renewable energy in the U.S. is coming from a handful of states that have invested in a clean energy future, despite U.S. federal policy that dramatically favors centralized, monopolistic energy from oil, coal, and nuclear power.

This summary of a few of our national budget priorities during the past eight years is a good illustration of how Vermont and other states are being forced to spend their dollars on activities that have prevented the “green economy” from coming to life.

1. Subsidies for coal and oil industry: $75 Billion
2. Afghanistan oil-gas war: $233 Billion
3. Iraq oil-war: $706 Billion
4. Renewable energy subsidies: $12 Billion

Our national government’s investment in the “green economy” this decade totals less than 1 percent of its investment in the fossil-fuel subsidies shown above. And so far, Obama has given every indication that his administration is all about continuity in these regards, versus change. Yes, there was $32 billion in the stimulus package for renewable energy and efficiency. That’s more than ever before, but is still peanuts compared to the trillions of tax and inflation-dollars that have been committed for continued global military insanity and corporate welfare. A national clean-energy policy will continue to be “back-burnered” behind healthcare, the economy, and war.

How can we build an independent, sovereign, energy-independent Vermont, when our national government has bankrupted us? Vermont’s economic and political independence will increase in direct correlation to how well we develop the foundation of our economy: sustainable, domestic energy. The good news is that market forces have made solar, wind, and biomass energy economically viable in Vermont. The bad news is, we’re attached to a sinking Titanic and we’re not moving nearly fast enough to deploy the lifeboats.

Renewable energy will create strong, decentralized, green economies for Vermont communities. In turn, local economies so well-grounded will provide a foundation for an effective commitment to human rights, and economic development that distributes food, water, and wealth more equitably and sustainably.

Our national government leaders, including those supposed champions of environmentalism such as Al Gore and Barack Obama, have given us only token gestures and a lot of empty rhetoric. Vermont’s U.S. Congressional delegation is impotent in these regards. Most national politicians claim to support renewable energy, yet their priorities, as expressed by the subsidies they extend with our tax dollars, continue to support coal, oil, and military adventures; by contrast, they characterize renewable energy as “in need of more research to make it cost-effective.”

We don’t need new energy technologies. We just need the cultural and political will to invest in the transition and take the power back from the vested interests that today control our energy economy. Most people believe that solar, wind, and biomass energy systems are not yet cost-effective compared to fossil fuels. That’s only because fossil fuels have been heavily subsidized for more continued on page 20
mid-19th century, cannot be overstated. There would not only be no controlling central bank in the modern sense, there would be no discretionary central issuance of currency by behind-the-scenes financiers, the government, or anyone else. The banking system would be set on its head. A bottom-up system of capital creation by demand would replace the old top-down system.

Most fundamentally, credit would be made available to the general public at a perpetually fixed, stable, and sustainable 1.1 percent interest rate on good collateral, instead of first being made available selectively to large institutions, who in turn lend it at their discretion to others—all in a usurious spiral benefiting creditors and sophisticated borrowers who can leverage their debts, leaving all others impoverished.

With interest eliminated as a factor in monetary policy, the principle engine of wasteful and compulsory economic growth—the forced repayment of loans in excess of their natural value in production and consumption—would be eliminated. There would be no need to labor frenzically to overcome the interest burden. Economic investment would be possible on the merits of the situation alone, not on a legal obligation or contract to meet an abnormally forced rate of return. A sustainable economics would become possible, for the first time since the pre-industrial age. And, not least, the widespread availability of capital to individuals, unknown since the closing of the western frontier in America in 1890, would do much to overcome the vast and growing discrepancies of wealth which exist because of usurous interest rates.

Kellogg, it should be clear by now, envisioned a very different kind of money from that with which we are familiar: “If money were properly instituted and regulated,” he tells us, “there would never be such a thing as a money market. There would be a market for the productions of labor; and these would doubtless vary more or less in their market value or price, but there would be no variation in the market value of money. It is as unreasonable for people to gain great wealth by fluctuations in the market value of money as it would be for them to gain great wealth by fluctuations in the length of the yard. Money is as much a standard of value as the yard is of length; and deviations in the market value of money are as much a fraud upon the public as deviations in the length, weight and size of other measures. No matter how long this gross wrong has been practiced upon all nations, it is no less an evil; and it has shown itself to be such by the centralization of wealth in every nation, and the poverty of the people whose labor has produced the wealth.”

If creditors are allowed to raise and lower interest rates more or less freely, as they have been for some centuries now with few exceptions, they have it in their power to favor some debtors and punish others, and to maximize their own profit by optimizing interest rates at what the money markets will bear: lower rates to stimulate borrowing and the economy, and higher rates to do the opposite. With no social responsibilities entailed by the decisions of lenders and borrowers, greed and fear are easily unleashed to cloud future estimates, leading to booms and busts, as we are now seeing once more today.

Unlike a central bank, Kellogg’s “Principal Institution” would not lend at interest at all, nor would it lend preferentially to some borrowers rather than others; nor would it have any discretionary power to manage the system, apart from enforcing uniform legal standards. Nor would there be any need for fractional or capital reserve lending. The Principal Institution, in short, would have no control over the money supply. Borrowers would be able to defer payment of the principal indefinitely, as long as they paid the interest: “[W]henever a mortgagor shall have the means, he can pay off any part of the mortgage, and stop the interest. But he will never be compelled to pay the principal as long as the interest shall be regularly paid.”

Kellogg, as we have noted, proposes that individuals be allowed to purchase public interest bonds from the branches of the Safety Fund—a system of public credit banks—at 1-percent interest, thus providing what he thought in his system would be a safe haven for parking one’s money. On the national level, we would no longer find a central bank in the modern sense. “The Safety Fund,” Kellogg tells us, “may consist of a Principal Institution with Branches,” and “the Principal Institution should issue money only to the Branches . . .” The issuance of currency only to the branches is what would enable the Principal Institution to monitor local practices and enforce the law; it would also prohibit it from issuing money to anyone else. A branch found in violation of national monetary standards (perhaps by charging illegal interest rates, refusing loans on good collateral, or otherwise defrauding the public) could be deprived of new currency to issue until reorganized on a sound basis. A local federal credit bank issuing too many bad loans, or refusing loans to otherwise credit-worthy citizens, would presumably be subject to legal penalties, including closure and reorganization. Without such a provision, we would have an unregulated system of anarchic banking. The national monetary standards, in addition, would determine for the Safety Fund uniform rules of credit-worthiness, rules of local public management, and other technical matters.

In Kellogg’s words: “It is not intended that the Safety Fund and its Branches shall be made offices of discount and deposit. If they should be made such, they would more than double the amount continued on following page
of their loans; but the increase of loans would not augment the amount of money. They would lend the money left on deposit, and thus increase their income, as banks now lend their deposits and gain the interest.”

When he says that public credit banks should not be made offices of discount and deposit, he is telling us that they ought not to be in the traditional banking business of making loans on deposit at all, much less on the basis of fractional or capital reserve banking. Kellogg fears much harm not only in the prospect of reserve banking, but of any loans on deposits at all. For this reason he rules out making deposits at public credit banks, and recommends that those who wish to park their money do so by buying Safety Fund bonds at 1 percent. He does not address the need (not so much felt in his day) for simple demand-deposit accounts, in place of the inconvenience of buying bonds, and perhaps Safety Fund branches today could be open after all to such deposits, provided no loans were made on them and that they were simply kept for the safe-keeping of the depositors.

Kellogg’s 1.1-percent loans would put capital into people’s pockets and encourage, he thought, a personal productivity hitherto unknown. In his words: “In the United States, if interest were reduced to one, or to one and one percent, useful productions would probably increase from twenty-five to fifty percent. The wealth, instead of being accumulated in a few hands, would be distributed among producers. A large proportion of the labor employed in building up cities would be expended in cultivating and beautifying the country. Internal improvements would be made to an extent, and in a perfection unexampled in the history of nations. Agriculture, manufactures, and the arts would flourish in every part of the country. Those who are now non-producers would naturally become producers. The production would be owned by those who performed the labor, because the standard of distribution would nearly conform to the natural rights of man.”

And further, he adds: “The per centage income upon capital can only be paid with the proceeds of labor; therefore this reduction of the per centage income would be equivalent to the distribution of several hundred millions of dollars among the producing classes, according to the labor performed. The effect of so large an annual distribution among this class would be to diffuse, in a few years, competence and happiness where now exist only poverty and misery.”

The new prosperity envisioned by Kellogg is not a function of usurious economic “growth,” but rather of the “distribution” of capital widely among the population. The increase in “useful productions” follows from this wide distribution of capital; with capital concentrated in a few hands the same magnitude of production might occur, but only to the benefit of a few, and thus not useful to the many.

**Usury vs. democracy**

Kellogg’s model of a decentralized but democratically regulated monetary system is worth pondering not only for financial and economic reasons, but for political ones as well. Democracy is necessarily a decentralized, face-to-face affair, and it cannot be successful unless its citizens personally enjoy relative economic independence in a relatively decentralized economy. Only then can they come together as equals in a free community.

Providing capital directly to the people will, over time, reduce economic inequality. Most citizens today, by contrast, are economic dependents, having been forced into debt peonage by usurious interest rates for most of the basics of life (education, housing, transportation, etc.). Not being free economic agents, they cannot oppose the harsh and destructive economic system which oppresses them, nor the policies of those who control it. A key step in making possible greater political freedom is the realization that a decentralized, self-regulating, non-usurious monetary system of the sort outlined by Kellogg and advocated in part by Greenbackers, Populists, the Social Credit movement, and others since the 19th century, can provide the basis for widely distributing and conserving wealth, making possible a more sustainable and fulfilling way of life.

One may be tempted to dismiss Kellogg’s ideas as remote, even Utopian. Kellogg was no idle dreamer, however, but a practical man who made his own way in the world; he was raised on a farm, largely self-educated, and successful in business. He took the long view and refused to conclude that the practical unlikelihood of ideas otherwise compelling was a fatal disqualification.

Let me give him the last word: “It may be admitted that the theory of the Safety Fund is good, but impracticable at present; it is calculated for some future generation, when men shall have become more intelligent and virtuous. If the same faith shall be held by the generations which are to follow us, it will be difficult to point out at what period this desirable reformation will occur, because the evil of our present system will always be in the present, and the good of the plan proposed in the future.

“We are, however, persuaded that a large majority of the people are aware that their present depressed condition may and should be exchanged for something better, and the Safety Fund will be regarded by them as neither too Utopian nor visionary to be made immediately operative for their benefit. All the objections to the proposed currency, upon the ground that it will lessen the incomes of capitalists who are supported by the labor of others, only serve to show the true working of the Safety Fund system; for its object is to furnish a standard of distribution which will cause men to sustain such mutually just relations as to render it generally necessary for all to render an equivalent in useful labor for the labor received from others.”

**If Vermont were independent . . .**

If Vermont were a sovereign state in control of its own destiny and currency, it would be free to establish a national system such as Kellogg’s. Such a system would guarantee access by all Vermonters with collateral to capital – that is, credit – on a nominal interest basis. It would create a Vermont currency, facilitate a sustainable economy, and avoid the compulsion to “grow” economically that arises out of the need to repay usurious debts. It would provide not only a medium of exchange, but a responsible
The Greenneck: Vermont In Winter

The season’s first big snow found him on the shed roof by 7 a.m., trying to nail down the last few sheets of tin before the storm begins in earnest. Already, the air is thick with snow. He sees the cows, bent to their feed, broad backs coated with white. He sees the boys, sleds in hand, trudging through the accumulating snow. They are yelling. Maybe they are arguing, maybe they are just yelling to notice how the snow hushes their voices. He yells, too, but they don’t hear or, if they do, don’t acknowledge hearing. They are getting older, learning that he can be ignored.

It is 16 degrees. The bare fingers of his nail-holding hand burn with the cold. The tin beneath his feet is extraordinarily slippery, and twice he almost slides off the roof edge. It is not a long drop, so he can enjoy the sensation of sliding, knowing that even if the worst should come to pass, it won’t be that bad. But it doesn’t.

He has always loved winter. For years, it was for the skiing, the cut-loose feeling of falling down a mountain, at once in control and out of it. He still loves to ski, but increasingly finds his appreciation of the season coming from quieter things. The sight of those cows, uncomplaining as the snow piles atop their hides. They stand so still, as if giving the storm permission to fall upon them. There is something honorable about it.

Or the way a block of hard maple sounds when it submits to the maul. Goodness, but he loves that sound, loves the lubricated feeling of his muscles working in the cold, loves gathering up the wood and carrying it indoors and watching the flames take it.

Even the absurdity of laying roof on a 16-degree morning, in a snowstorm, no sure footing to be found. He should be cold – hell, he is cold – should be miserable, should probably wait for the storm to pass. It’s not his work ethic that keeps him up there, nor some misguided notion of what defines valor. He has no surfeit of these particular traits, although it is true that he takes strength from the sight of those cows, from the sound of his boys whooping in the cold. It is true that a small part of himself will measure its worth against the portion of the job that remains unfinished at day’s end.

But it is more true that the settled, elemental nature of winter soothes him in a way he can’t quite define. He does not see it as a battle; it is more like an acquiescing, a simple, humble acknowledgement that there is so much beyond his control. The cows know it. He’s pretty sure the boys know it, too, though it probably won’t be long before they forget. They are only human, after all. That is their only failing.

He comes down. The task is unfinished but he is, at last, too cold to carry on. He looks up through the hole in the roof, feels the snow on his face. In a moment, he’ll go inside, hang his coat, put his gloves by the fire to dry. In a moment, he’ll be warm. But for now, he stands there, doing nothing.
When was the last time you saw a movie that opened with a plea for revolution? No, not the kind with bullets and bombs, but the kind Thomas Jefferson said should happen every twenty years—a revolution in our thinking? The kind of revolution Michael Ruppert calls for in the opening scenes of the new film Collapse is one that takes place inside us. This kind of revolution is one that Ruppert has lived since he was a political science major at UCLA in the '70s. Whether you like him or not, whether you agree with him or not, you cannot argue that every word that comes out of his mouth in Collapse issues from bone-marrow experience—the kind none of us would ever welcome, the kind some of us would have long since committed suicide over, the kind most of us would gladly walk away from. Yet, Mike Ruppert is still alive, still speaking his truth, and amazingly, still able to laugh and play music.

From this point forward I will refer to Michael Ruppert as simply “Mike.” That’s because despite the fact that we’ve had our disagreements in the past and more than a few “come to Jesus” moments, this guy named Mike – “Ruppert,” “MCR,” the LAPD narc, the investigative journalist, the “batshit insane conspiracy theorist” (as he has been derisively labeled) – is still my friend, and has been for almost a decade.

So what kind of movie opens with the main character coming in, sitting down, lighting a cigarette, and being asked, “So who are you?” Shortly, the viewer may be thinking, “Wish they hadn’t asked that question because I really don’t want to know.” That means that by the time you’ve heard three minutes of Mike’s personal story, you are already appalled and prepared to plug your ears and do anything but hear more. Your first response may be, “That can’t be true,” yet his story is fully documented in writing and by verified numerous eyewitnesses. In summary, his was no ordinary childhood and certainly no ordinary law enforcement career. All roads led to that career as a highly decorated Los Angeles Police Department detective, and everything after has been impacted by it. For as Mike very clearly states in the movie, that clean, dedicated, 27-year-old cop is still alive in him and has always wanted some answers – and yes, some justice.

But to the same extent the conscientious cop lives within him, so does the cartographer, the map maker, whose life depended on finding out how the world really works as opposed to how we’ve been told it works. I would say that at least 80 percent of his work has evolved out of an attempt to save his own life. That brings it down from ivory tower speculation to a soulful and cellular level.

**Collapse: Peak Oil**

If you still doubt the validity of Peak Oil, you won’t after you watch this movie’s second segment. I’ve heard and read volumes on Peak Oil, but Mike’s explanation always rings in my ears more loudly than that of any other because of its clarity and simplicity. However, he admittedly stands on the shoulders of numerous Peak Oil-researching giants such as Dale Allen Pfeiffer and what he calls “The Three Wise Men”: Colin Campbell, Matt Simmons, and Richard Heinberg.

In Collapse, Mike explains that it requires the mind of a cop to understand how Peak Oil fits into the rest of the map of events in terms of motive, means, and opportunity. It is now the fundamental underpinning of global foreign policy — not only that of the United States, but of all industrial nations. Institutionalized denial of Peak Oil, or the refusal by our government to tell the truth about it, is nothing less than criminal, according to Mike, because it means that we are building our future as if Peak Oil doesn’t exist — sacrificing the lives of future generations so that we can live comfort-
This issue’s Homestead Security column continues our series, Oil to Soil and Back Again. Part I (“Rapid Topsoil Formation in the Solar Age”) appeared in our Fall 2009 issue; Part II (“Harvesting Value from Your Leach Field”) was published in our Stick Season/Holidays issue (November 2009). Highlighted here are few lesser-known soil-building strategies that are of 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.

**Cover cropping and winter cover**

Cover cropping during the growing season as part of good crop rotation will probably be considered standard practice in life after the cheap-energy economy. Peak Oil holds a future in which imported growing media and nutrients in the form of soil, manure and other fertilizers will be increasingly expensive and/or unavailable. Cycling fertility on site perpetually will be crucial in a post-peak future and will determine, in large part, the economic success of a farm and viability of a homestead.

Since nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input, producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.

Nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input; producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.

Nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input; producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.

Nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input; producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.

Nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input; producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.

Nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input; producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.

Nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input; producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.

Nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input; producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.

Nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input; producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.

Nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input; producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.

Nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input; producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.

Nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input; producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.

Nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input; producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.

Nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input; producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.

Nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input; producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.

Nitrogen is the most often-relied-upon off-site input; producing and harvesting nitrogen on site via fertility farming will help determine the economic viability of future land uses.
Spread cover crops the day the garden is cleaned out at the end of the season, rake it in if necessary (depending on species), water if needed, and turn in the cover as soon as possible in the spring if it does not winterkill. Buckwheat is a favorite cover (though it doesn't fix nitrogen), because it winterkills reliably. There are many good resources for cover crops available on-line and in print form. Seek out the most appropriate covers for your phase of land development, soils, climate, your particular cropping cycle, and other relevant aspects of the site's system such as animal-forage needs.

**Tall-grass grazing**

Picture a 10,000-head mob of buffalo or wildebeest thundering across the plains of North America or the Serengeti. Is healthy topsoil what comes to mind? For most of us, steeped in conventional ecology and environmental science, the answer is “Hell no!” Instead, we imagine ecological destruction from overgrazing and desertification.

The association between grazing animals and land abuse is not unfounded: Poor grazing practices (not necessarily “overgrazing”) contribute greatly to the desertification of large areas of the earth, wrecking soil and water and leaving a high climate-change bill. But that’s different from the quick movement of densely packed animals through a landscape, as in the American West, Africa, and other places where deep-soil prairie lands and massive herds of animals co-evolved.

Modern grazing is typified by low-density animal stocking, occupying the same land area over long periods of time. Picture your typical Vermont pasture dotted with a few animals here and there.) This is the opposite approach to regenerative grazing, which builds soil and grows the healthiest animals. Innovative graziers have recently been realizing that high-density, very short rotations (the cycles naturally performed by grazing herds for millennia) is a far more productive approach to managing pastureland.

Enter intensive tall-grass grazing, **mob stocking**, or whatever your preferred term may be for regenerating the landscape through the application of grazing animals. When a large number of densely packed, heavy animals moves through a landscape quickly, occupying that landscape just once or twice a season, the following soil-building events tend to occur:

1. Tall grasses, with correspondingly deep roots, are grazed down to within a foot of the ground, but not completely down to the ground which damages the plant’s ability to rebound. Plant roots dieback as a response to this pruning, leaving organic matter (carbon) in the soil strata. The deeper the roots have penetrated, the deeper into the soil this organic deposition occurs. And the taller the grass was before grazing, the deeper the roots were able to grow. This is the organic matter/carbon-pumping stage of the system.

2. Densely packed animals drop nitrogen in the form of manure as they graze. They also turn up clods of sod, allowing access for rainwater to bring the newly deposited nitrogen and biological activity (microbes in the manure) into the soil. Think of cattle as an enormous living rotovator spewing nutrients behind it; that’s the action of a massive animal herd if allowed to move through, not loaf upon, a patch of ground. Rains wash the fertility and biological inoculants into the newly broken-up soil, where it can penetrate deeply and not run off of the landscape as it would more readily were the surface unbroken. This is the fertilizing and soil biology-enrichment stage of the process.

3. Grasses left standing six to 12 inches by the quickly moving herd rebound quickly and are allowed to grow to hip height or taller before the herd is brought back again. This is the resting and re-growth/root-penetration stage of the system.


These three steps are the primary reason why vast areas of land have been improved and sustained, not desertified, by the presence of massive animal herds. Modern “mob stockers” like Joel Salatin and Abe Collins are applying this understanding to ecologically (“biomimetically”) manage their animal herds for the multifunctional production of meat, milk, soil fertility, drought resistance, greenhouse effect reversal, and the many other benefits of healthier, deeper soils.

The take-home points here for the modern homesteader or restoration farmer are the following:

Let it grow! You can only build soil as deeply as you can get your plant roots to penetrate (what comes up must go down), so the taller you let your yard or pasture grow before it’s cut grazed the more soil you’re making (and CO2 you’re sequestering). Think of any areas in grass as pasture or vegetable gardens-to-be – areas where you want good soil. An upshot here is that mowing, if you now, wants to happen three to five times per year, not per month.
than 50 years. The price you pay for electricity or heating oil would be at least twice as high if not for decades of heavy federal subsidies. In most European countries gasoline has cost more than $8/gallon for many years, and electricity costs are generally twice the U.S. national average ($0.16/kWh vs. $0.08/kWh in the U.S.). If today’s renewable energy systems were deployed at a scale to cover a majority of our energy needs, the cost per kilowatt-hour from solar, wind or biomass would be less than unsubsidized coal-electricity.

Vermont’s energy profile

Vermont is already a national leader in energy issues, with tremendous local energy resources within our borders. We have the capacity to become energy independent with aggressive investment in hydro, wind, solar, and biomass energy systems. Without the hopeless burdens we carry as part of the U.S. Empire, we could create a sustainable, just economy.

We are the only state in the nation with a state-supported efficiency utility, and we have significantly reduced our energy use per person during the past decade. We could attempt to buy back our hydropower sites from the out-of-state corporations that Governor Douglas allowed to purchase them. Nearly 30 percent of Vermont school children attend schools that are heated sustainably by high-efficiency boilers burning locally harvested woodchips and yielding low emissions. Vermont has enough standing biomass in the forest to sustainably heat every house in the state with wood, which would keep more than $700 million in the annual local economy instead of paying for out-of-state oil and propane. Vermont was the first state in the nation whose legislature passed a statewide “feed in tariff” bill that forces utilities to pay favorable rates to producers of renewable energy (albeit with a conservative cap at less than 5 percent of our power needs, for now). Vermont’s business community has spawned many renewable-energy companies that are national leaders. In fact, Vermont probably has more clean-energy expertise per capita than any other state in the country. These companies include NRG Systems, Earth Turbines, and Northern Power Systems (the latter recovering from several rocky years, economically), all of them international leaders in wind turbine/measurement technology; Biomass Energy Resource Center, the nation’s leader in biomass feasibility studies for district heating and power generation; groSolar, leader of the pack in solar installation; NativeEnergy, specializing in voluntary renewable energy credits (RECs) and carbon offsets that fund renewable energy projects; Vermont Energy Investment Corp., an international leader in efficiency programs and consulting which also runs Efficiency Vermont (EVT). And there are others besides.

Sadly for those who had hoped for “change,” it appears that Barack Obama and the U.S. Congress will pay lip service but not much more to the development of a green economy, while continuing to push our resources into war and debt. Vermont’s fastest path to a clean-energy economy is to build it ourselves by removing our federal burdens – for example, by seceding. We could then invest our hard-earned money in Vermont’s priorities, including local, decentralized renewable-energy systems, instead of endlessly subsidizing the oil, coal, and military industries.

Future “Energy Optimist” columns will explore Vermont’s energy options in more depth. Other topics are also covered on the VT Commons Blog at www.vtcommons.org/blog/gaelan-brown.
Thus, what moments of revolution to which Mike refers in the opening
were during those years, because the collapse of
the economic crash in September, 2008, were espe-
cially tough for many of us; we were labeled invet-
cialy to awaken and embrace the new paradigm.

Anything that happens in the future, he says, will be
governed by the same principles. Civilization and all of its
attendant horrors is not something to celebrate. However, we are inspired
by what is happening, and all those who are just now connecting
To what is happening, and all those who are just now connecting

Sustain Champlain
“Leaner. Greener.”

CHAMPLAIN COLLEGE

Watch Our Student-Produced Film "Shorts" Online
at YouTube/SustainChamplain

go.champlain.edu/sustain

Bluebird Tavern
Welcome to THE GASTROPUB!
Bluebird Tavern is a neighborhood gastropub
restaurant located on Riverside Avenue in Burlington Vermont.
Our food is simple, refined, and celebrates the bounty of
Vermont and the northeast region. Here, we share a deep
commitment to real food and drink. We offer our convivial
tavern as a throwback to the old public house, a gathering
place for our community.

Monday – Thursday
4pm – 5pm Tavern Menu
5pm – 9pm Supper Menu
9pm – 10pm Tavern Menu

Friday & Saturday
4pm – 5pm Tavern Menu
5pm – 9pm Supper Menu
9pm – Midnight Tavern Menu

Sunday
10am – 3pm Brunch

802-540-1786
317 Riverside Ave., Burlington, Vermont
visit our website to see photos,
gather recipes and check our menus.

bluebirdvermont.com

Free Vermont Media, continued from page 17
deer-in-the-headlights response, in which one is
frozen with fear and surprise and begins to ask,
“What does this mean? What do I do?” A second
response is, “We know this is happening, we know
we’re all going to die unless we build lifeboats, so
let’s get busy doing it.” A third group says, “This is
the Titanic; it’s unsinkable.”

Everything is going to break down differently
in different places, according to Mike. Currently,
we are seeing the bumpy plateau of energy prices
which fluctuate wildly. The critical, lethal point of
the plateau for the human race will be when oil
prices spike again and no one can afford to buy the
oil – at which point everything will shut down.

Collapse: The transition phase
What is critical now is for us to begin to put
new structures in place before the old infrastruc-

ture completely crumbles. That phase could last
between 20 years (which would be incredibly fast)
to 50 or 100 years. What is crucial is that we don’t
panic but rather analyze our own local situation
to see what structures must be put in place there.
Shortages will occur, but most likely gradually as
opposed to abruptly. Specific shortages will happen
in specific places for a specific period. Thus, what
is important is not to prepare for the end result of
collapse, but to prepare for the transition.

When asked if a collapse can be “prevented” by
human ingenuity, Mike pensively responds with,
“No amount of technology, no amount of human
ingenuity can overturn the laws of physics and the
laws of the universe.” Humankind’s greatest peril,
he asserts, is to believe that it can overturn those
laws and “become God.”

He very directly admonishes us to: buy gold,
insulate your house, restore the soil around you
and grow food in the restored soil; get organic
seeds and store them; get a land line; and real-
ize that your cell phone will not be available as
the system’s collapse exacerbates. Local food
production is the most fundamental key to human
survival in the collapse of industrial civilization.

For example, when the Soviet Union collapsed,
North Korea and Cuba were desperately depen-
dent on Soviet oil. The two nations adapted to the
loss differently. North Korea maintained its rigid
communist system, and millions starved. The
 Cuban government adapted by growing organic
food almost everywhere, abandoning the agribusi-
ness model. The idea was to grow food where
people were going to eat food, and the result was
remarkable resilience—and survival. The phenom-
enon to which Mike is referring in this section of
Collapse is well documented in the 2006 film The
Power of Community. In this new 21st-century
human paradigm, everything will be local, and
as all animal species know, survival will and must
occur in community, not in isolation.

Collapse and cultural evolution
Collapse director Chris Smith has succeeded in
capturing the essence of Michael Ruppert, and
one aspect of that essence is the monumental load
of grief he carries regarding having spent three
decades crying “from the wilderness” for human-
ity to awaken and embrace the new paradigm.

continued on page 24
services. They function as a medium of exchange but, not being available in advance of production, they have inadequate capacity as vehicles of future investment. They can only reflect past production, and so are of little help in financing projects we cannot fund out of current cashflows. They are not a solution to the money question. If local currencies as we know them were the only money available, local economies would be starved for capital and gradually contract.

Kellogg's monetary system avoids this fatal flaw. Our privatized, usurious financial system, which leads to debt peonage for most, remains for all its faults a mature system in the sense that it provides credit ahead of production. Kellogg's system does the same, but without the burden of usury.

As long as Vermont remains part of the United States under the current Constitution, it is prohibited by Article 1, Sections 8 and 10 from issuing its own currency. There may be a way to get around this. A state-owned public bank could be established, alongside the private banks. Operating in U.S. dollars, it would have to depart from some of Kellogg's principles, though not his all-important 1.1-percent fixed interest rate. It could accept deposits from the state government (tax revenues) and from private individuals and institutions. A precedent is the state-owned Bank of North Dakota – the only one in the United States. On the basis of its deposits and other capital, such a bank could lend to citizens of Vermont at something like Kellogg's 1.1-percent rate. If it used fractional reserve banking on the collateral for its loans, it could lend out amounts considerably beyond the value of the collateral pledged to it. Kellogg disapproved of fractional reserve banking, but it might be necessary for a state bank in competition with private banks. It could also offer depositors a 1-percent rate of interest on their deposits. The Federal Reserve notes being used would remain subject to inflation beyond the control of Vermont. The Bank of Vermont might have to calculate its rates (1.1 percent on loans and 1 percent on deposits) in terms of inflation-adjusted dollars. In the event of deflation, a similar calculation could be made. With a conservative collateral-reserve ratio, and perhaps other assets, along with a careful assessment of loan worthiness, this State Bank of Vermont could provide low-interest capital to citizens while ensuring a rate on the deposits adequate to protect their value, especially from deflationary pressures. This in itself – breaking the monopoly on credit by private usurious lenders – might be sufficient to establish a non-usurious financial system.

But serious challenges would remain. Vermonters would still have the regular usurious financial system available to them. Some borrowers would be willing to take greater risks in hopes of greater gains through usurious loans, beyond what they could get on collateral through public loans. And some might borrow from the state bank, but leverage the borrowed money through public loans. And some might borrow from the state what they could get on collateral through public loans. And some might borrow from the state bank, but leverage the borrowed money through public loans. And some might borrow from the state what they could get on collateral through public loans. And some might borrow from the state bank, but leverage the borrowed money through public loans. And some might borrow from the state what they could get on collateral through public loans. And some might borrow from the state bank, but leverage the borrowed money through public loans. And some might borrow from the state what they could get on collateral through public loans. And some might borrow from the state bank, but leverage the borrowed money through public loans. And some might borrow from the state what they could get on collateral through public loans. And some might borrow from the state bank, but leverage the borrowed money through public loans.

If Vermont can't abolish usury implicitly simply by breaking the private monopoly of usurious finance, it could still do so by explicitly outlawing usury within its borders. Such action appears not to be precluded in the prohibitions on the powers of the states listed in Article 1, Section 10 of the Constitution; and Article X of the Bill of Rights suggests it is in the power of the states: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people."

If usury were abolished by law in Vermont, depositors and investors would still have the option of going outside the state, and no doubt many would. But Vermont investors free to get usurious terms outside the state would bring that income back into Vermont, spending at least some of it at home. Vermonters would benefit, like the Israelites of the Old Testament, free in this approach to accept usurious income from outside, but prohibited from charging it of one another. Under these conditions, if no other banks or institutions or anyone else in the state could offer interest inside the state at more than the same low, fixed rate of 1.1 percent, a significant, statewide, usury-free zone would be created, perhaps one sufficient to foster a viable low-interest, public credit economy, particularly among local producers.

The implications of abolishing usury are far-reaching, and there will be unintended consequences and important details to consider beyond the scope of this essay, but here is a path very much worth exploring. By abolishing usury, Vermont would take a powerful step toward exercising its sovereignty within constitutional bounds. It may not be political secession, but it may well be something just as important: economic secession.

1. Kellogg, _New Monetary System_, p. 306
2. Ibid., p. 279
3. Ibid., p. 286
4. Ibid., p. 289
5. Ibid., pp 184-5
6. Ibid., p. 192
8. Kellogg, _New Monetary System_, p. 306
The Internet was created by military research (DARPA) using taxpayer dollars, yet U.S. citizens receive no direct return on their investment. Land values are socially created assets, as without population or municipal services, land is nearly worthless. All of these socially and naturally created assets lend themselves to the creation of joint property rights, the collection of revenue, and the distribution of dividends. Distribution of revenue from common assets directly to the public has many advantages including fairness, efficiency, and freedom. The marginal benefits are greatest to the lowest-income citizens, yet no transfer payments are required.

One of the primary ways in which wealthy and poor countries differ can be found in their ownership and control of natural and social resources. Norway, Abu Dhabi, and Alaska all have major oil resources, and are relatively wealthy. Nigeria has massive oil deposits, Congo has gold, diamonds, cobalt, copper, and coltan, and yet these countries are desperately poor. Why? One reason is that wealthy countries with effective governments all exert sovereignty over their resources and collect resource rents and royalties for public revenue. The “Resource Curse” is due to poor governance. Poor countries’ resources are often controlled by foreign corporations, local dictators, warlords, or militias, and revenue doesn’t benefit the public. During the current economic slowdown, Norway is turning to its $300 billion sovereign wealth fund to cushion the blow to its economy, instead of using debt. Alaska residents enjoy a nearly $2,000 annual dividend from their $30 billion Permanent Fund, and Abu Dhabi’s sovereign wealth fund is the world’s largest at $800 billion.

The federal government, meanwhile, has given away 98 percent of our “public airwaves” for free, and allows private banks to create 93 percent of the currency with interest attached. Citizens and businesses are subject to taxation of earned income, which impacts job creation and economic productivity, while resource owners collect massive amounts of unearned income. All over the world, countries are beginning to exert sovereignty over their resources, such as Ecuador over oil and Bolivia over lithium. Can Vermont reclaim sovereignty over its natural and social resources, or will we remain a banana republic?

During the Golden Dome’s legislative session of 2007-2008, State Representative Hinda Miller introduced a bill embodying the principles of Barnes’ Capitalism 3.0, written by legislative counsel Al Boright, entitled the Vermont Common Assets Trust Fund Bill: S.44. (A new bill is being written for 2010.) Numerous co-sponsors signed on, including Senator Condos of Chittenden District, Senator Doyle of Washington District, Senator Illuzzi of Essex-Orleans District, Senator MacDonald of Orange District, Senator McCormack of Windsor District, and Senator Snelling of Chittenden District.

After a meeting with David Bollier in September 2007, legislators requested more information about potential revenue from common assets. In spring 2008, a Public Administration course at the University of Vermont took on the project of calculating the value of common assets in Vermont. We estimated the value to be about $1.2 billion, which would amount to a dividend of $1,972 per person per year in Vermont. Vermont Commons: Voices Of Independence news journal will present the details of our findings in the next several issues.
Free Vermont Media, continued from page 21
Yet even as the grief is poignantly revealed to us through Mike’s tears, so is the balance he maintains through savoring love, fun, play, and making people smile – all of which are instructive to those of us who are consciously preparing for collapse.

**Institutionalized denial of Peak Oil is nothing less than criminal, because it means we are sacrificing the lives of future generations so that we can live comfortable lives based on a lie.**

In the film, Mike also reminds us of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross’s “Five Stages of Grief,” and comments that our society appears to be caught in the Anger stage. Ironically, the day I began this review was the same day in which the Ft. Hood massacre occurred, followed by another terrifying shooting rampage in Orlando, Florida. The protracted debate on healthcare over the course of 2009 has been punctuated by numerous violent outbursts at town meetings and insane rages against “socialism” by thousands of hurting middle class Americans. Caustic vitriol pervades our crumbling “socialism” by thousands of hurting middle class Americans. Caustic vitriol pervades our crumbling culture, and that chilling reality is exacerbated by mainstream media’s massive lies, distortions, and omissions. Mike suggests that how we get through this phase is critical – and unfortunately, we have little in our culture to assist us in moving through it. However, once we do, and once we begin experiencing acceptance, we are then able to discover like-minded “passengers” on the Titanic with whom we can ally to build lifeboats.

I was recently asked if I thought it was possible that I could be “wrong” about Peak Oil and climate change. My response is that it’s possible to be wrong about anything. But as Mike so powerfully comments in Collapse, there is no longer anything to debate. Engaging in debate on these issues is very much like debating whether the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Peak Oil and climate change are happening. What’s to debate?

For those who expend energy on political solutions, Mike points out that “capitalism,” “socialism,” and “communism” are outmoded political terms “that need to be put in the trash can immediately.” The only thing the human race will be concerned with in the future is survival, and ideologies and political parties are showing us less than nothing about how to do this. Engaging in large-scale political processes is not only futile; it deprives us of the energy we need to be investing in survival. All these ideologies were created on the premise of infinite resources, and none offer a balance with the planet’s actual resources and other species.

**Collapse and Obama**

Yes, we have a sincere, likeable guy in the White House, but, says Mike, Barack Obama is a prisoner of the government, of politics, of the Federal Reserve, of a system that’s archaic. Don’t make success or failure rest on his shoulders. The only thing any of us can possibly change is our minds.

Stop running from your fear, Mike admonishes us, and starting moving toward embracing your fear, because therein lies our ability to survive. This will be, he optimistically reminds us, the greatest evolution in human thinking our species has ever known. Do not run away from any emotion, because that is the life experience. In those emotions we find the richness of art, music, poetry, and all human creations. Our greater work, he says, is to pull that richness out of the rubbish of civilization’s paradigm – a comment that bears uncanny resemblance to what I have written in Sacred Demise: Walking The Spiritual Path of Industrial Civilization’s Collapse.

**Collapse: Conclusion**

Collapse draws to a close with Mike’s recounting in detail the Hundredth Monkey story (I’ll save the details for you to discover). For all its poignancy and sad moments, Collapse leaves us with great optimism, joy, possibility, and inspiration. While the logistical focus of the movie is on Michael Ruppert, the ultimate focus is on each of us – on that part of us that knows in every cell of our bodies that we are now in the throes of collapse, and that our survival and the meaning of our very existence lies in embracing and living out the Michael C. Ruppert that abides in each of us.

**The only thing the human race will be concerned with in the future is survival, and ideologies and political parties are showing us less than nothing about how to do this.**
fundamental economic, political, and cultural reconstruction work that will enable us and our communities to flourish in a decentralizing, post-Peak-Oil world. As Frank Bryan reminds us in this issue (page 4): “Vermont is free of the residues of the old system and may therefore immediately apply its energy to creating the future…” “Immediately” is the catchword.

Radical change is nonetheless a stubborn question of belief. If you cling to the old system, believing that it remains reliable, safe, and secure, as most of our politicians here in Vermont do, then the recent report by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance that a host of indigenous renewable energy sources, including hydro, rooftop PV, and wind, can provide 152 percent of our state’s electrical needs at an average kWh cost of 5.7 cents, will not stimulate you to act. (Please read our new “Energy Optimist” column by Gaelan Brown, page 13, to learn more.) Nor will you notice that Daddy down in D.C. is bankrupt, and therefore you will not try to understand what Daddy’s bankruptcy means — to you.

The movement for a moral, sovereign, and sustainable commonwealth of Vermont towns inspired six years ago by Thomas Naylor, creator of the think tank the Second Vermont Republic, has spawned several activities now on the verge of bearing fruit. These include a group that will exercise oversight of Vermont government according to the principles set forth in the Vermont Constitution, as well as a larger group responsible for developing a detailed platform for achieving Vermont independence; a digital online music provider that features an entire library of Vermont musicians (Free Vermont Radio); a Vermont Currency Initiative group (which includes exploration of founding a Vermont Bank), and various smaller groups currently in formation around such tasks as grassroots organizing, tax revolt, collapse preparation, and not least, electoral politics.

On January 15, Vermont Independence Day, independent candidates and their supporters for all 30 of Vermont’s senate seats, lead by Dennis Morrisseau of West Pawlet, and two other candidates, one for governor (Dennis Steele of Kirby) and one for lieutenant governor (Peter Garrittano of Burlington) will announce their campaigns and platforms at 2 p.m. at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Montpelier.

Be there. Help us build a movement for social change.

IAN BALDWIN
Publisher Emeritus
Celebrate Local Abundance

Village Square, Waitsfield, Route 100 • (802) 496-7763

We Do!
The largest selection of locally grown & produced products in the Mad River Valley

EAT LOCAL FOR LOCALS

Imagine eating local in January.
Now imagine eating local without breaking the bank.

Three Course Winter “Localvore” Dinner for only $20

Every Wednesday & Thursday throughout January

Eat, Drink & Be Mary’s

Pioneering Vermont’s Local Food Movement since 1983

Lunch & Dinner
Comfortable Fine Dining
Eclectic Wines
Creative Cocktails

Chef Aaron and Debbie Millon
RestaurantPhoebe.com
52 State Street, Montpelier
802.262.3500

CONGRATULATIONS to Chef Aaron who has been named one of the top 40 chefs under 40 in the U.S. by the journalists at the environmental Website Mother Nature Network (MNN).

Great NEW Daily Specials: MONDAY: $2 off wine by the glass / TUESDAY: $10 Tuedays ($2 draft and an $8 burger) / WEDNESDAYS: 1/2 off Select Bottled Wine / THURSDAYS: 20% off small plates / FRI/SAT: Kids 12 and under Eat Free 5:00-6:30 (limit 3 children per family, kids’ menu options available). Cooking classes available.

DINNER: MONDAY-THURSDAY 5:00-9:00 / FRIDAY-SATURDAY 5:00-9:30
CLOSED SUNDAY
AVAILABLE FOR PRIVATE PARTIES, FOR LUNCH AND FOR DINNER

INN AT BALDWIN CREEK
Mary’s Restaurant
1868 North Route 116, Bristol
802.453.2432
www.innatbaldwincreek.com
To the extent that you can, manage your animals for short grazing periods, in tall grass. Plan the grazing rotations carefully.

**Keyline agriculture**

“Keyline” activities, such as plowing and ditching, convey water from the valleys, where it collects, toward the ridges, which are the driest areas of the landscape. Keyline agriculture was conceived of in the drylands of eastern Australia, largely by P.A. Yeomans, and it is especially powerful for regenerating arid lands. However, it probably has strong applications in Vermont, where the combination of soil compaction, clay soils and steep sloping land create water-limiting conditions where precipitation moves across, not into, the soil. If drought conditions become more consistent, keyline approaches will also be crucial for lower-angle landscapes.

The biological climax and dieback action described in the tall grass-grazing section above is probably the most potent soil-building tool for application across very large areas of the planet, but its effectiveness can be limited by soil compaction and water availability. Fortunately, soil compaction can be addressed by subsoil plowing via a Yeomans-style keyline plow. Other keyline methods of agriculture are aimed at water capture so that the root-dieback action can occur in lands where significant slopes cause water to run off so quickly that only minimal amounts actually enter the soil. This water-managing aspect of keyline agriculture is foundational and addresses the inconsistencies in water availability across a field.

At its fullest extent, keylining involves storing water high in the landscape, usually via a pond; subsoil plowing (which loosens the soil rather than turning it like a moldboard plow) in a slightly downward-trending pattern from the valleys out toward the ridges of a field, bringing water from the wettest areas to the driest; and flooding the landscape after a grazing rotation, distributing the manure/bio-inoculants across and into the landscape. Think of a rain or flooding event washing nourishment across and into the landscape. Since roots only want to penetrate relatively loose soil where oxygen and water are present, keyline agriculture leads with the water, mechanically allowing water to enter areas of the soil not previously available.

Water leads, roots follow, soil organic matter is deposited, carbon is banked in the soil. Flood prevention, climate stabilization, farm fertility, drought resistance, crop nutrient density and myriad other benefits result. Deep, healthy soils support resilient ecologies and culture – most other functions can only be built atop its solid foundation. •

---

**Homestead Security, continued from page 19**

An unmanicured field on a sloping hillside; nature’s way was best after all. BEN FAULK

---

**DeBaville’s General Store**
**Bliss Village Store/Bradford**
**Dan and Whit’s General Store**
**Powers Market/North Bennington**
**Snowville General Store**
**Sam Frank Inc. (Rutland)**

**ASSOCIATE MEMBER**
**Vermont Commons: Voices of Independence**

---

**Honoring Pride in Achievements**

Everything you need to celebrate and share life’s moments, milestones and memories.

- Rings, Caps and Gowns, Diplomas, Graduation Announcements and awards
- Honors achievements.
- High school, college, and continuing graduation.
- Varsity sports.
- Fire, law enforcement or armed service recognition.

Custom designs for every occasion.

Contact Jostens Vermont representative Stephen Sands
E-mail - stephen.sands@jostens.com
Web site - www.jostens.com
Phone - (802) 496-7969

**Honor Achievement with a Jostens ring • www.jostens.com**
LOOKING FOR A VERMONT AUDIENCE?

Advertise with Vermont Commons news journal.

We have the most affordable advertising rates in Vermont.

YESTERMORROW

Introducing our new Woodworking Intensive Program
January 31st - April 9th, 2010

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS!

FREE CATALOG 888-496-5541
www.yestermorrow.org

SPIRIT OF 1777 PARTY!

SATURDAY JAN. 9
8PM

CELEBRATING VERMONT INDEPENDENCE MONTH.
DRESS AS YOUR FAVORITE PAST OR PRESENT VERMONT ICON & WIN PRIZES!
RAFTLE, DANCING & MORE
$20 / $15 IN VT COSTUME

LIVE MUSIC WITH “THE HECK HOUNDS” & “BIG BASIN BAND”!

THEATER CAFE FULL BAR SODA FOUNTAIN WIFI LOUNGE
802.496.8994 48 CARROL ROAD WATSFIELD, VT OFF ROUTE 100 OPEN 7AM-10PM
WWW.BIGPICTURETHEATER.INFO

Durable investments for Life After Cheap Energy

Spring Hill Solutions

clean energy carbon management business sustainability

Working with businesses and communities to create comprehensive, cost-effective solutions.

802.864.2372 | www.springhillsolutions.com
209 College Street, Third Floor East, Burlington, VT 05401

Whole Systems Design, LLC

shelter energy food system integration

www.wholesystemsd.com
The Phineas Gage Band
"Music for Happy Brains."

Parties - Openings - Weddings - Jamfests - Barnburners

Book us by calling 802.279.3364 or emailing rob@vermontyak.com

Visit us online at phineasgagevt.blogspot.com

WINTER 2010 VERMONT COMMONS 29

Letters, continued from page 3
its head and sets course. Leadership takes the risk
of its raised head being cut off, not cultivate a politi-
cal career and a relationship with corporations that
provide low wages and not health coverage, saying
as little as possible. The Senate must provide leader-
ship. The Senate must do far more than simply
decide which programs get stimulus funds, and
which will be cut. That is why we independents are
running in 2010 for the Vermont Senate, Governor
and Lt. Governor.

ROBERT WAGNER
Ripton

ENTERGY TRIES ANOTHER
WALL STREET SHELL GAME

Editor, Vermont Commons:

Having spent almost six years working in
The Navy/Atomic Energy Commission’s Naval Reactors Program headed by Adm. H.G. Rickover
in the 1960s, I gained enough experience with
nuclear reactors to be sensitive to the technical and
financial troubles they pose.

When the Vermont Public Service Board (PSB)
hearing on Vermont Yankee re-licensing started
well over a year ago, I petitioned the PSB to become
a party. My request was denied for the reason that
the Vermont Public Service Department (PSD)
would be looking out for my interests. Before the
PSB made its decision to deny my request I posed
my questions for discovery and sent it to all parties
in pre-file testimony.

In October 2009, I wrote the following open letter
to my representatives to the Vermont Legislature,
the PSB, the PSD and The Times Argus:

"The big news about Vermont Yankee nuclear
touches deal with Yankee") is that the Vermont
Department of Public Service (DPS) has reversed
its position on the Entergy/Enexus spin-off deal. David O’Brien, Commissioner of the DPS, says that Entergy has come up with “real money”
which makes the spin-off deal more attractive and
less risky to Vermont taxpayers.

“Well, one can ask, ‘Is this true? Is the money
now somehow magically real?’

“From my research, perspective, and review of
Business Week commentary and the Securities
Exchange Commission (SEC) analysis of the
spin-off deal, I see a typical Wall Street market-
ing campaign. What looks like a spin-off is really
a reorganization of limited liability corporations
(LLC) with new names, hedging contracts, and
with EquaGen, the basic prime mover of the whole
entity, still providing the services to Entergy and
Enexus, without which Entergy and Enexus would
not be viable.

“The ‘real money’ that David O’Brien and the
DPS are enamored with appears to be a billion-
dollar ($1,000,000,000)-plus credit agreement
that Entergy and Enexus have cobbled together
from banks and companies (Bank of Nova Scotia,
Goldman Sachs Credit Partners, L.P., Paribas,
Mizuho Corporate Bank, and Citigroup Global
Markets, Inc.). In some way this is supposed to
make Enexus more able to cope with its three-
billion-dollar ($3,000,000,000)-plus debt.

“The hope by Entergy and Enexus is that the
reorganization will somehow make the compa-
nies more attractive, resulting in more investors,
increasing the price of stock, bringing in money,
and reducing the overall debt of these LLC
companies.

“It’s no secret that the United States is
still in financial trouble. Trillions of dollars
($X,000,000,000,000) of taxpayer money has been
used to bail out private banks and companies. This
is money that isn’t even in the U.S. Treasury because
the U.S. has essentially borrowed money from
China and elsewhere to keep us going. Even now
the Federal Deposit Insurance Company (FDIC) is
out of money and viable banks are being asked to
pay three years worth of their assessed contribu-
tions to this fund immediately so that the fund can
continue to rescue and restructure failing banks.

“This stormy and uncertain financial climate,
coupled with no stronger regulations in place to
prevent abuse and fix the problems that created the
financial mess, does not bode well for the hope that
Entergy and Enexus are placing in their reorganiza-
tion and renaming scheme. In a day of panic selling
on Wall Street, Enexus can go belly up, bankruptcy
proceedings divide up the carcass and the Vermont
taxpayer is left holding the bag, trying to find new
energy sources and cleaning up the site of radioac-
tive waste.

“I don’t want to put my faith and energy future
in a Wall Street shell game. Why not recognize the
many uncertainties, risks and costs, especially the
unknown and most likely high costs to keep an
aging reactor repaired and safe. Given this uncer-
tain and complicated climate I’m not surprised that
there is still no contract for Vermont Yankee power.

“My view is that we are entering a new era regard-
ing how we humans relate to the environment and
how we arrange our financial affairs. We need to
abandon Vermont Yankee now and go to alternative
energy and conservation. Why delay the inevitable
and embrace the risks, unknown high costs, greater
decommissioning costs, and uncertainties? Time is
of the essence. If we delay the inevitable, the conse-
quencies and growing problems may be more than
we and our grandchildren are able to bear.

“It appears the Department of Public Service
is failing us in this matter. I urge the Vermont
Legislature to be very thorough in its analysis and
debate, and to make the right decisions to set us on
a sane and sustainable course for the future.

Sincerely,”

In a letter I received from Susan Hudson, Clerk
of the PSB, dated 11/20/09, she stated that my
letter had been received and was forwarded to all
Board members and is part of the public record.

Will the Vermont Legislature close down
Vermont Yankee at the end of its design life of 40
years in 2012? Given human beings’ propensity to
keep doing what they are doing until a crisis strikes
(and even then we try to keep doing the same thing!), I fervently hope it doesn’t take a major
nuclear or financial crisis to finally spur us to make
the right decision in this case.

RICHARD CZAPLINSKI
Adaman
IF BEACHES DISAPPEAR, MUSICIANS WILL HAVE NO PLACE TO BUILD THEIR BEACH HOUSES.

HELP ROCK STARS SAVE THE PLANET.
Introducing 1% For The Planet: The Music Vol. 1, featuring Jack Johnson, Mason Jennings, Jackson Browne, and more. All proceeds benefit 1%’s continued efforts to make the planet a more beautiful place.
Visit music.onepercentfortheplanet.org to listen to exclusive tracks.
It is completely beyond me why the people of this country/Empire haven’t taken to the streets and marched on the political castles with torches, pikes, clubs, and muskets like good townfolk used to do.

Just look at the utter incompetence, not to mention skullduggery, of what they’re doing in Washington. It is a government incapable of ... well, governing.

Take “health care.” In half a year what they have fussed about so bunglingly didn’t even attempt to address the basic problems with a system that is by far the most expensive in the world, providing care that ranks 37th. Instead, they have tried to create an insurance scheme that actually would force individuals to buy it or pay stiff penalties – an intrusion of government into citizens’ lives even worse than the military draft – with “care” defined by earmarks selected by medical and pharmaceutical lobbyists. Whatever comes out in the end looks like it will be an expensive disaster.

Take global warming. They cobbled together a cap-and-trade scheme that they admitted would place a heavy energy cost on every household, but what they didn’t acknowledge was that it would create a system just like the one in Europe that has been a complete failure. Nor did they admit that it would principally benefit the energy trad... ers themselves, including those like Al Gore who admitted that it would principally benefit the energy trad... ers themselves, including those like Al Gore who set up trading outfits to get the windfall. Luckily, it looks at this point as if it won’t even pass.

Take Afghanistan. Here the U.S. Congress had nothing to say, abdicating its Constitutional responsibility to “raise and support Armies,” and the White House had nothing to do because it had no good options. Popular opinion strongly believed, and all the facts available demanded, that the U.S. should pull out as quickly as possible and leave a corrupt and unsustainable state to its own devices. But no, the big fool said to push on.

What should be obvious is that it is impossible to govern a nation of 300 million people covering four-million square miles.

Simple as that. It doesn’t work, and hasn’t for quite some time. Let’s look at a few of the more recent highlights of inability.

- The failed elections of 2000 and 2004 – failed, first, because of the mediocrity of the candidates offered; second, by inanity of most parts of the country (not only Florida and Ohio) to know how to register and count votes, thanks in no small measure to congressionally mandated and corporate-owned electronic voting machines.
- The complete failure to know how to fight a war in Iraq, at a cost of millions of lives, a shattered society (which we have spent $2 billion in five years to reconstruct), wasted on shoddy building and unshoddy corruption), and a collapsed international reputation. Nor Afghanistan, which repre... sents eight years of bumbling. The U.S. government, however, has succeeded in fueling Arab terrorism around the world at an increasing level.
- Blindfold unwillingness to do anything about the enormous debts and deficits the nation/Empire is running up, including the inability to do anything about the looming failure of entitlement funds, especially Medicare and Social Security. What does it say when the United States is $80 trillion in hock to China?
- Katrina. Remember?

Instead of marching on the castles, ignore them.

- Dithering in the Middle East, while supplying economic and military support to an Israel that continues its hegemonic and disruptive policies against Palestine, and sitting by while both sides commit war crimes. Yet that support gets the U.S. no closer to any “peace” talks, while inflaming Arab opinion against the U.S. and keeping jihadism alive.
- A government-sponsored mortgage crisis, beginning with Clinton policies in the 1990s to recklessly expand home ownership, blown into a full-scale disaster by banks and hedge funds deliberately allowed to be unregulated, and by a Federal Reserve in the grip of Ayn Rand similarly uncontrolled.
- A multi-trillion-dollar bailout (with taxpayer money) of the very banks and funds that caused that calamity, certain to lead to inflation, without any provision that the money be spent to increase lending and secure the economy instead of million-dollar bonuses. Or create more jobs. Hence the economy remains fragile and the rich get richer.
- Campaign financing—a disgraceful joke, made only worse by the various federal schemes to oversee and reform it, until the open buying of congressional and presidential candidates by corporate and financial interests becomes one of those scandals so egregious that no one wants to talk about because it is at the heart of the political system.
- Unregulated legal and illegal immigration.
- Out-of-control federal spending, particularly on military overstretch (including weapons even DOD doesn’t want), space boondoggles, and ruinous agricultural subsidies, in the form of pork bills and earmarks that are the hallmark of a system so thoroughly corrupt it is no longer remediable.

Need I go on? You get the point – and you’ve probably also got your favorite that I’ve overlooked. Pick up a paper, any day, any page, and you’re likely to find another example of the utter inability of this nation not only to solve but, let’s face it, even to understand its problems.

Given all this, the rumblings and grumblings of the tea-party people and the state-sovereignty movement make a certain sense. But they don’t really have any idea how deep the problems go. They still think that, if they get conservatives into federal offices and some Tenth Amendment patriots into the state houses, that reform is possible. What a risible idea. The system at this size and complexity is entrenched, and protected by the corporate-political dyad that is its beneficiary, and it will not be reformed. So why don’t the people rise up against it and do away with it?

Follow the logic of their tea-party suspicions and decide that the federal government simply shouldn’t decide what to spend on what – that should be in the hands of independent states. Follow the logic of state sovereignty and make the states sovereign once again.

Why doesn’t nonviolent secession immediately rise up in the minds of these angry citizens as the obvious and easiest answer? If changes are to be made, they must be made on a smaller scale, with less corporate corruption, and with at least some chance of citizens participating in the decisions that affect their lives. That means secession. If budgets are to be properly financed and spent, they must be in the hands of the people most directly affected, who can understand the costs and benefits on the ground. That means secession.

And here’s the best part. The townfolk don’t even have to march on the castle with pike and musket. That would run a risk of provoking the baron to the kind of overreaction people in power tend to make – and given the thoroughly militaristic nature of the barons of the federal government, a risk of such things as force being used and detention camps being set up and martial law being declared.

So instead of marching on the castles, ignore them. We don’t want you; you don’t govern us any more; you won’t have any more control over our lives. We’re going our own way. No harm will come to you unless you interfere, but we want our own town our own way. Secession. Peaceful secession.

Given the disgraceful scene before our eyes, with evidence mounting daily of a government unable to govern, that sort of conclusion is certain to occur to more and more people. It is our task to lead them – carefully but surely – to the contemplation of independence and the wisdom of secession. •
The Commonwealth of Vermont presents...
Share your ideas and solutions with us at www.vcommons.org/platform

**Political Independence.** Our primary objective is political independence for our once and future Vermont republic, through the legitimate constitutional process of nonviolent secession from the United States.

**Entrusting the Commons.** We advocate the creation and maintenance, through legislation and oversight, of a Vermont "Commons" - environmental, cultural, social, informational - to value and protect all that we Vermonters share in common - our air, our water, our land, and our property, both private and communal.

**Human Scale.** We believe that life is best lived on a human scale, in face-to-face contacts with neighbors and friends, in communities that are decentralized in nature. Small is still beautiful.

**Financial Independence.** We support the creation and use of a publicly-owned Bank of Vermont that would issue low-interest loans and foster a peer-to-peer mutual credit system, and the creation and use of a state-wide alternative currency system.

**Food Sovereignty.** We support family-owned farms and small businesses that produce innovative, premium-quality, healthy locally manufactured products.

**Election Integrity.** We recommend that Vermont, in conducting its local and state elections, replace all corporately-owned electronic voting machines with the time-honored traditional hand-counting procedure used by each Vermont town's board of civil authority, encouraging a process that is open, public, and transparent.

**Energy Independence.** We encourage 21st century approaches that move us away from our reliance on imported fossil fuels and centralized electrical generation, and toward policies that encourage import-substitution, and a more local and diversified energy portfolio, with emphasis on self-sufficient home- and business-generated energy.

**Homestead Security.** We celebrate Vermont's small, clean, green, sustainable, socially responsible towns, farms, businesses, schools, and places of worship, and encourage the diversification of Vermont's working landscape. We encourage the diversification of Vermont's working landscape, and the creation of opportunities for Vermonters to produce their own food, energy, and value-added products.

**Education for Democracy.** All young Vermonters should have open access to learning opportunities that enable them to realize their own unique potentials and to participate actively and responsibly in their communities and society at large. Drawing on the "Vermont Design for Education," we advocate the replacement of federally-mandated standardized testing and rigid rote learning with "hands on" community-centered education, and the creation of a "communiversity" in every Vermont town's public school.

**Economic Solidarity.** We encourage Vermonters to buy locally produced products from local merchants, rather than purchase from giant, out-of-state mega-stores. We support fair and open trade with nearby states and provinces.

**Power Sharing.** Vermont's strong democratic tradition is grounded in its town meetings. We favor devolution of political power from the state back to local communities, making the governing structure for towns, schools, hospitals, and social services much like that of small decentralized states like Switzerland. Shared power also underlies our approach to international relations.

**Equal Opportunity.** We support equal access for all Vermont citizens to high quality education, preventative and routine health care, housing, and employment.

**Tension Reduction.** We urge the Vermont state legislature and governor to issue a call for the return of Vermont National Guard troops from Afghanistan, Iraq, and the other 700 plus U.S. military bases in more than 130 countries around the world. Consistent with both Vermont's long "live and let live" tradition and policies of nonviolence, we do not condone state sponsored violence inflicted either by the military or law enforcement officials. We support a voluntary citizens' brigade to reduce tension and restore order in the event of civil unrest, and to provide emergency assistance when natural disasters occur. We are opposed to any form of military conscription. Tension reduction is the bedrock principle on which all international conflicts are to be resolved.

**The Commonwealth of Vermont Working Group**
- **Collapse Preparation/Transition Towns:** Rob Wagner, Repson
- **Council of Censuses:** Rick Foley, Brattleboro
- **Electoral Politics:** Dennis Morrisseau, West Pawlet
- **Free Vermont Radio:** Dennis Steele, Lyndonville
- **Grassroots movement:** Gaelan Brown, Fayston
- **Monthly meeting coordinator:** Ian Baldwin, South Stafford
- **Tax Issues:** Gary Flomenhof, Burlington
- **Vermont Commons News Journal:** Rob Williams, Waitsfield