

## Imagine Free Vermont, The Switzerland of North America

Thomas Naylor

If Vermont were to secede from the United States of Empire and become an independent nation-state, how could it possibly survive as a separate republic? How would it function? Are there any examples of smaller, sustainable nation-states which might serve as a role model for a state like Vermont, should it decide to leave the Union?

There is at least one such nation that might serve as a viable model for an independent Vermont: the Swiss Confederation. When Julie Andrews mesmerized millions with her lilting lyrics as she sang “The hills are alive with the sound of music,” she was singing about the Austrian Alps not far from the Swiss border. But she might very well have been singing about Vermont’s Green Mountains, which have far more in common with their taller Swiss and Austrian counterparts than many realize. Could Free Vermont become the Switzerland of North America?

With a population of only 7.3 million people, a little larger than that of an average American state, Switzerland is one of the wealthiest, most democratic, least violent, most market-oriented countries in the world, with the weakest central government and the most decentralized social welfare system. Founded in 1291 near Lake Lucerne, the Swiss Confederation may be the most sustainable nation-state of all time.

Situated in the heart of Europe, Switzerland has always existed in a state of tension between opening and closing its borders to the outside world. Even today it has nearly one million so-called “guest workers.” For centuries it has been an area of settlement and a transit region of European north-south commerce. The country’s economy has long been geared to processing imported raw materials and re-exporting them as finished goods, such as specialty foods and pharmaceutical products.

The Swiss enjoy state-of-the-art technology, and their banks and financial institutions are among the most stable and financially secure anywhere in the world. The same is true of the Swiss franc.

**Swiss Federalism.** Over the past 700 years or so Switzerland has developed a unique social and political structure, with a strong emphasis on federalism and direct democracy, which brings together its 26 cantons (tiny states), with populations ranging from 14,900 to 1,187,000, and its four languages and cultures – German, French, Italian,

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Vermont's  
statewide independent  
news journal

Wall Street hog jumping Main Street sheep. See “Beating Wall Street: How To Recover Vermont’s Monetary Commons” on page 5 of this issue. PETER MILLER

## In 2010, Voices of Independence Emerge In Vermont Politics

### Candidates Declare for Legislative and Executive Office

Will Lindner

Depending on people’s various perspectives, this was either a long time coming or a burst, unexpected and almost precipitous, of commitment put into action – commitment to the principle that Vermonters *have* principles, that they needn’t and shouldn’t continue to allow those principles to be subsumed by something gargantuan: a corporately and militarily dominated global empire.

The concept of a Vermont carving its own alternative future is not audaciously new. It has long been championed by Duke University professor emeritus, international entrepreneur, and Charlotte, Vermont, resident Thomas Naylor, who in 2003 founded the movement called The Second Vermont Republic, which advocates peaceful secession from the United States. What is new this year, however, is that the chick has burst its shell; a group of Vermont independents, loosely affiliated yet committed to that affiliation, is seeking elective office in the statewide political campaigns of 2010. Their ambitions include both houses in the state Legislature, the governorship and lieutenant governor, and their geographic range neatly covers the map of Vermont.

Thus voters in at least six State Senate districts and

two House districts will have a new, independent, choice at the ballot box in November, and all the state’s voters will have a corresponding choice in the governor and lieutenant governor races. (Although the abruptly altered filing deadline – yanked from September up to June by an action of the 2010 Legislature – raises a new barrier to the electoral process, these numbers might yet increase.)

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## Editorial

# The Not-So-Dire Implications Of Collapse

Mike Ruppert, the Prophet of Collapse, came to the mountains of Vermont last May.

The ex-cop shaped by his hazardous South Central L.A. beat made no bones about it: the collapse of the globalized economic and political system had begun. Witness the Greek kamikaze attack on the Euro, witness the whistling kettles of sovereign default that are the West's leading economies, witness the exploding economic, ecological, and soon-to-be momentous political repercussions of the Deepwater Gulf disaster. Witness the U.S.'s ongoing imperial overstretch in far-flung lands even as insolvent state and local governments start laying off police, fire, and other essential service people — and Tea Parties break out across the land.

His message was blunt: peak oil means the end of industrial civilization. It's time to make lifeboats. Red alert!

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**Here was a new way to see  
ourselves – not just as Vermont  
secessionists seeking divorce from  
a once-loved partner, but as part  
of a “union” of countless planetary  
lifeboats. Humanity!**

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Ruppert enjoyed being in Vermont, and he repeated, at each of his four appearances in Burlington, Montpelier, Brattleboro, and Woodstock (as well as a short-notice appearance at Claire's Restaurant in Hardwick), his absolute conviction that these United States were going to soon break apart and that it was far better to be pro-active and plan for secession than to sit back and wait for it to happen.

He openly admired Vermonters' reputation for flinty independence. Perhaps, wrenched free of the demands and constraints of the federal behemoth's perpetual wars and lies, we Vermonters were ready to seize the day — take on and fulfill the challenge of true sustainability as a sovereign people.

Driving Ruppert to Burlington airport to catch his flight back to L.A., I watched him suddenly flip open his cell phone and call his lawyer and creative collaborator on his new website, [www.CollapseNet.com](http://www.CollapseNet.com). “Wes? Mike here. Everything we do from here on is part of the Lifeboat Movement. And Vermont is the biggest lifeboat in the movement.” He hung up and explained: “That will pull all the boats into one big movement. Vermont is part of a global movement – the biggest single example.”

These words caught me. Here was a new way to see ourselves, not just as Vermont secessionists who seek a divorce from an abusive, once-loved

partner, but to be part of a truly capacious, exciting new marriage, a marriage without borders, heedless of any criteria but a readiness to act, a love of freedom, and a need to be connected – a “union” of countless planetary lifeboats. Humanity!

## II.

During Ruppert's two-hour radio interview with Mark Johnson on WDEV on May 14, a hostile skeptic called in to deride the idea that Vermont could ever be an independent nation. Without its federal father standing by, Vermont was a waif, a mirage on the road to nowhere, unable to secure itself against any enemy, or to feed or otherwise provide for itself. *Baaaaa!* Where is my shepherd?

My god, I wondered, how do such myths of vulnerability – of incapacity – get installed in

unshakable individual minds? Did the caller know that we here in east central Vermont get almost year-round tomatoes from a single Vermont grower (Longwind Tomatoes in East Thetford)? Had he read Eliot Coleman's *Four-Season Harvest* (pioneered while the author worked on the Mountain School's hilltop farm in Vershire)? Did he know that Pete's Greens grows 200 kinds of vegetables in Craftsbury and sells many of them year-round? Did he know of Intervale's role in Burlington's food system?

How do our imaginations get to be so impoverished as this hapless WDEV caller's? Teevee? VPR? How do we so utterly lose sight of our roots as a people living in a singular, spectacularly generous place? (Yeah, and a hard place too.)

Collapse has a multitude of meanings. Growth  
*continued on page 4*

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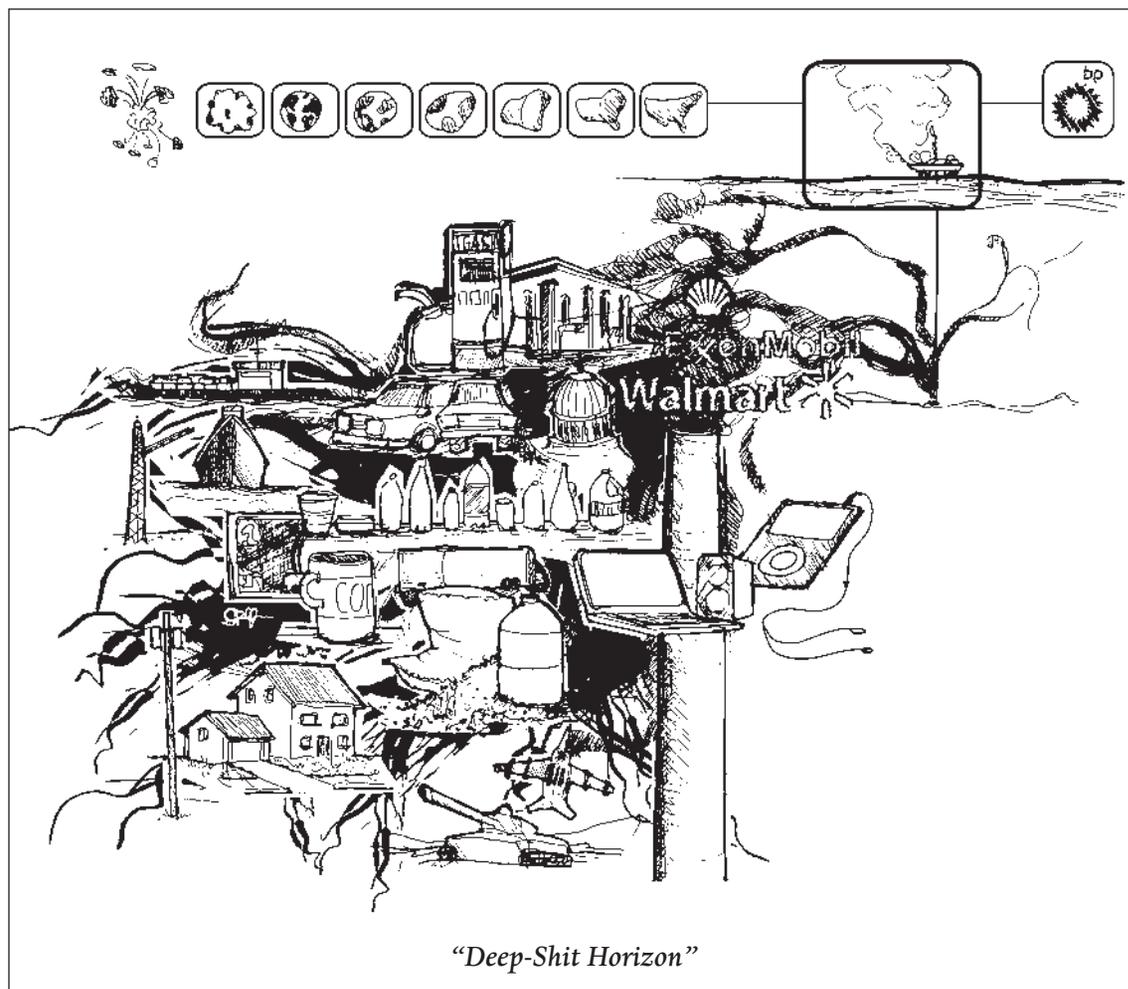
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"Deep-Shit Horizon"

CORNELIUS MURPHY

### Vermont Commons welcomes your input.

Please e-mail letters to [editor@vtcommons.org](mailto: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.

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308 Wallis Drive, Waitsfield, Vermont 05673

#### Business Office and Advertising

PO Box 1121, Waitsfield, Vermont 05673

#### Circulation

10,000 copies in 330 venues throughout Vermont six times a year, and through PO subscription.

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## Letters to the Editor

### LET'S GET REAL

Editor, *Vermont Commons*:

T. Keith Preston shows extraordinary naiveté in his "Secession, Not Aggression" article in the spring 2010 issue of *Vermont Commons*.

First, he extrapolates secession of Vermont (which is a long shot, to say the least) to secession of so many states that the U.S. federal government collapses. How many "verys" should we put in front of "unlikely" for that scenario?

Second, he expects that in a post-secession world all the characteristics of the old system that he despises will disappear and be replaced with all the characteristics of a new world that he adores. Need I remind him that Vermont is still a highly diverse society with highly diverse concepts of the ideal?

Here's a practical problem to contemplate. If this union of states were to disband, what would happen to the stores of nuclear weapons? If all the divided states eschew ownership of such distasteful objects, would we donate them to North Korea? Not likely. How about giving them to NATO-ally France? Never. Perhaps the most likely result would be that only one state would express the desire for nuclear weaponry: Texas. That would make Texas the policeman of the planet with the ability and responsibility to make sure that all other sovereign states behave as Texans think they should.

I also predict that the first agenda item in a post-secession Vermont would be something near and dear to Vermonters that has been suppressed for

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

more than 200 years: making war on New York. Just kidding. Or am I?

The truth is that the only thing secession is guaranteed to accomplish is disruption of the old system. What the new system might bring is a huge roll of the dice. Anyone who claims to know in advance how it will turn out is a fool.

By the way, I too am very attracted to the idea of secession for Vermont. I relish risk and I acknowledge the inherent uncertainty. Therefore, I support most of the yearnings expressed in *Vermont Commons*. However, that doesn't mean that we should tolerate naive arguments in support of secession.

DICK MILLS  
Sailing Vessel Tarwathie

### FALSE FLAG LEGISLATION

Editor, *Vermont Commons*:

I am a member of Vermont30, a group of independent voters planning to replace the 30-member Vermont Senate on November 2, 2010 or November 6, 2012. Why? To reward them for unfaithful performance.

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*Editorial, continued from page 2*

of anything reaches a climax, from the individual human being to a population of rabbits and foxes to a whole empire. Such a climax of complexity that is presented by that ultimate great human creation – civilization – is characterized by what might be termed a proliferation of Achilles' heels, and the rain of arrows that never stops is bound, sooner or later, to pierce one of those heels and set into motion a cataclysm so great it eventually ends up immortalized in myth.

With peak oil comes peak money. And peak food. And peak population. Only *homo sapiens sapiens* could be so delusional in these circumstances to prognosticate his numbers at over nine billion by mid-century. This is not going to happen. On the contrary. Hence our need to work hard, as Ruppert urged us during his stay here, on the upcoming business of survival, of digging deep in the most nourishing and essential elements of culture – from growing food to making soul- and spirit-nurturing music.

What ensues from collapse is an era of ever-greater simplicity, a kind of backward rotation in material "wealth," of superabundance, accompanied, ironically, by a forward rotation of spiritual wealth. Minus offset by plus. "The age of abundance is over," claims the Archdruid. He adds that the achievements of the unknown preservers of tradition in the Dark Ages succeeded "because . . . the energy you don't need to spend maintaining your standard of living can be put to work doing something more useful" ("The world after abundance" [www.energybulletin.net](http://www.energybulletin.net)).

The future thus becomes prologue to the past. But it is never boring. On the contrary, it is the fount at which humanity refreshes its deepest impulses.

IAN BALDWIN  
Publisher Emeritus

*Letters, continued from page 3*

If you are concerned about rising unemployment, foreclosures, homelessness, economic depression, rising inflation, pointless foreign wars, about 1,000 U.S. military bases around the globe, corporate personhood, political bribery protected as "free speech," unlimited corporate lobbying spending, corporate giveaways that have unbalanced state budgets, still no universal health care, offshore drilling disasters, Kleen Koal, nuclear renaissance, and last but not least, ballot-access manipulation, please read on.

Not surprisingly, the Vermont30 are seriously considering relief from Washington's yoke around Vermont's neck by way of independence.

Your professional career politicians, Claire Ayer of Addison County and Randy Brock of Franklin County, have sponsored Senate Bill 122 to deny ballot access to independent candidates. But to deceive the public about their intent, they have buried their legislation in obtuse legalese. When Congress enacts multipurpose legislation, the title ends in "...and for other purposes." Not in Vermont.

They titled this legislation "No. 98. An act relating to recounts in elections for statewide offices." It includes three provisions: first, the right of certain candidates for recounts; last, nomination of justices of the peace; and buried in the middle, this gobbledygook:

Sec. 7, 17 V.S.A. §2402(d) is amended to read: § 2386. Time for filing statements. [The provision affecting independents is buried in subsection] "(d) A statement of nomination and a completed and signed consent form shall be filed as set forth in section 2356 of this title. No public official receiving nominations shall accept a petition unless a completed and signed consent form is filed at the same time."

Please note the complete and deliberate absence of the words "independent candidates"

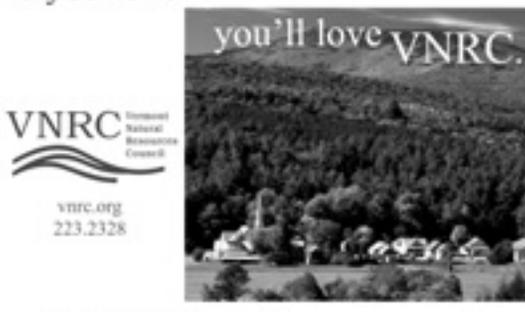
or "moving the due date from September 17, 2010, to June 17, 2010, for independent candidates." To conceal their perfidy, there was no roll call vote, so voters will not know how "their" professional career politicians voted on this abuse of power.

According to Wikipedia, "'False Flag' operations are covert operations designed to deceive the public in such a way that the operations appear as though they are being carried out by other entities. The name is derived from the military concept of flying false colors – that is, flying the flag of a country other than one's own. False flag operations are not limited to war and counter-insurgency operations, and have been used in peacetime, for example during Italy's strategy of tension."

Upon this legislative perfidy, I propose a new term: FALSE FLAG LEGISLATION. Please give your governor and 180 legislators full credit for their perfidious, mistitled act. In addition, 18 registered Vermont voters filed an application on May 17, 2010, with the Vermont Supreme Court, requesting relief from this false flag legislation. Don't hold your breath.

PETER MOSS  
Fairfax  
(Peter Moss is a self-described "Peace Candidate for U.S. Senate and Vermont Senate.")

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# Beating Wall Street:

## How To Recover Vermont's Monetary Commons

Gary Flomenhoft



This article continues an ongoing series in Vermont Commons exploring how Vermont might generate much-needed revenue AND protect our commons in this new century. Here we present PART 1 of a two-part article by Gary Flomenhoft on recovering Vermont's monetary commons; PART 2 will

follow in our fall (September/October) 2010 issue.

*"I too have been a close observer of the doings of the Bank of the United States. I have had men watching you for a long time, and am convinced that you have used the funds of the bank to speculate in the bread-stuffs of the country. When you won, you divided the profits amongst you, and when you lost, you charged it to the Bank. You tell me that if I take the deposits from the Bank and annul its charter I shall ruin ten thousand families. That may be true, gentlemen, but that is your sin! Should I let you go on, you will ruin fifty thousand families, and that would be my sin! You are a den of vipers and thieves. I have determined to rout you out and, by the Eternal, (bringing his fist down on the table) I will rout you out."*

(From the original minutes of the Philadelphia committee of citizens sent to meet with President Jackson, February 1834, according to Stan V. Henkels, *Andrew Jackson and the Bank of the United States*, 1928.)

Of all the common assets that have been privatized, arguably the most damaging and most fundamental is the U.S. government's constitutional power to create money. This is due to the fact that when the government needs money it has to borrow it, with interest, from the Federal Reserve Bank, or other countries, rather than issue it interest-free

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**Hubbert predicted that when the growth curves for money and fossil fuels began to diverge, human society would face a cultural crisis. Arguably we have reached this crisis.**

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itself. "Andrew Jackson called the privatized 2nd national bank of the U.S. a 'hydra-headed monster eating the flesh of the common man.' He swore to do battle with the monster and to slay or be slain by it." (*Web of Doubt*, by Ellen Brown.) Jackson managed to avoid two bullets from an assassin's gun, and later paid off the entire federal debt – the only president in U.S. history to ever do so.

### Presidents versus banksters: snapshots

The battle between government and private banks did not begin with the Federal Reserve Bank,

or even with Andrew Jackson. This history is recounted in Ellen Brown's excellent book, *Web of Debt*, which I highly recommend. It goes back to the English Colonies and to Ben Franklin's colonial scrip, and the bills of credit issued by Massachusetts and other colonies. It factored heavily in the motivation for secession of the English colonies from the British Empire in the American "Revolution." "In 1751 King George enacted a ban on the issue

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**Tangible currency makes up less than 3 percent of the U.S. money supply. The other 97 percent exists only as data entries on computer screens.**

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of all new paper money in the New England colonies, forcing the colonists to borrow instead from the British bankers," Brown explains. "When the colonists could not issue their own currency, the money supply had suddenly shrunk, leaving widespread unemployment, hunger, and poverty in its wake . . . the outraged populace ignored the ban and went back to issuing their own paper money." British suppression of this, according to historian Alexander Del Mar (1895), was the major cause of the American Revolution of 1776.

Jump ahead 70 years. At the outset of the so-called Civil War (1861-1865), eastern banks offered the Union \$150 million at an interest rate of 24-36 percent. In response, President Abraham Lincoln authorized the U.S. government to issue United States Notes, popularly called "Greenbacks," that represented man-hours rather than ounces of gold. More than 400 million interest-free Greenback dollars were printed and used to pay soldiers and government employees, and to buy supplies for the Civil War.

Fast forward a century. John F. Kennedy authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to issue U.S. Treasury silver certificates, and he was the last president to issue freely circulating United States Notes (Greenbacks). After Kennedy's 1963 assassination, Lyndon Johnson replaced United States Notes with Federal Reserve Notes, and revoked their ability to be redeemed in silver. U.S. \$1 silver certificates were also no longer allowed to be redeemed in silver. Many financial historians have raised questions about the role of monetary policy in the assassinations of presidents Lincoln and Kennedy, and the two attempts on Andrew Jackson.

### What is the Federal Reserve?

As Michael Ruppert is fond of saying, "the so-called 'Federal Reserve' is neither." I have found no better summary of our current Federal Reserve banking system than the following from the introduction to *Web of Debt*, presented here in its entirety:

- The Federal Reserve is not actually federal. It is a private corporation owned by a consortium of very large multi-national banks.
- Except for coins, the government does not create money. Dollar bills (Federal Reserve notes) are created by the private Federal Reserve, which lends them to the government.
- Tangible currency (coins and dollar bills together) make up less than 3 percent of the U.S. money supply. The other 97 percent exists only as data entries on computer screens, and all of this money was created by banks in the form of loans.
- The money that banks lend is not recycled from pre-existing deposits. It is new money, which did not exist until it was lent.
- Thirty percent of the money created by banks with accounting entries is invested for their own accounts.
- The U.S. banking system, which at one time extended productive loans to agriculture and industry, has today become a giant betting machine. By December 2007, an estimated \$681 trillion were riding on complex high-risk bets known as derivatives – 10 times the annual output of the entire world economy. These bets are funded by big U.S. banks and are made largely with borrowed money created on a computer screen. Derivates can be and have been used to manipulate markets, loot businesses, and destroy competitor economies.
- The U.S. federal debt has not been paid off since the days of Andrew Jackson. Only the interest gets paid, while the principal portion continues to grow.
- The federal income tax was instituted specifically to coerce taxpayers to pay the interest due to the banks on the federal debt. If the money supply had been created by the government rather than borrowed from banks that created it, the income tax would have been unnecessary.
- The interest alone on the federal debt will soon be more than the taxpayers can afford to pay. When we can't pay, the Federal Reserve's debt-based dollar system will collapse.
- Contrary to popular belief, creeping inflation is not caused by the government irresponsibly printing dollars. It is caused by banks expanding the money supply system with loans. (*Author's note: But huge loans by the Fed to government for deficit spending amounts to the same thing as printing money.*)
- Most of the runaway inflation seen in "banana republics" has been caused, not by national governments over-printing money, but by global speculators attacking local currencies and devaluing them on international markets.

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Beating Wall Street, continued from page 5

- The same sort of speculative devaluation could happen to the U.S. dollar if international investors were to abandon it for a global “reserve” currency, something they are now threatening to do in retaliation for what they perceive to be American economic imperialism.
- There is a way out of this morass. The early American colonists found it, and so did Abraham Lincoln and some other national leaders: the government can take back the money-issuing power from the banks.

*“It is maintained by some that the [private U.S. 2nd] bank is a means of executing the constitutional power ‘to coin money and regulate the value thereof.’ Congress have established a mint to coin money and passed laws to regulate the value thereof. The money so coined, with its value so regulated, and such foreign coins as Congress may adopt are the only currency known to the Constitution. But if they have other power to regulate the currency, it was conferred to be exercised by themselves, and not to be transferred to a corporation. If the bank be established for that purpose, with a charter unalterable without its consent, Congress have parted with their power for a term of years, during which the Constitution is a dead letter. It is neither necessary nor proper to transfer its legislative power to such a bank, and therefore unconstitutional.”*

(Andrew Jackson’s Veto Message Regarding the Bank of the United States; 10 July 1832)

#### The need for infinite “growth”

Another side effect of money being created almost entirely through interest-bearing loans is



**Biking to the bank: What we need in Vermont is more sloooow money, rooted in community need, not Wall Street greed.**

BRIAN MOHR/EMBER PHOTO

the necessity of the U.S. economy to constantly grow in order to provide the additional means to pay back the interest. In 1976, MK Hubbert wrote that “no physical quantity can follow this (exponential growth) curve for more than a brief period of time. However, a sum of money, being of a non-physical nature and growing according to the rules of compound interest at a fixed interest rate, can follow that curve indefinitely.” He predicted that when the growth curves for money and fossil fuels began to diverge, human society would face a cultural crisis, since we are “a culture so heavily dependent upon the continuance of exponential growth for its stability that it is incapable of reckoning with problems of non-growth.” Oil extraction plateau’ed in 2005, and has remained level for five years, and oil prices spiked to \$147 per barrel in 2008. Since the oil extraction and price peak coincided with the financial crisis, arguably we have reached this cultural crisis.

Short of nonviolent secession and the re-invention of Vermont as an independent republic, how might Vermont take back the unconstitutional money-issuing power of the Federal Reserve? The U.S. Constitution in Article 1, Section 10 states:

*“No State shall enter into any Treaty, Alliance, or Confederation; grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal; coin Money; emit Bills of Credit; make any Thing but gold and silver Coin a Tender in Payment of Debts; pass any Bill of Attainder, ex post facto Law, or Law impairing the Obligation of Contracts, or grant any Title of Nobility.”*

That would seem to settle it, wouldn’t it? No coining of money or emitting bills of credit by the states. (I assume that the requirement for gold and silver has been superseded by the courts.) Let’s say you are not a secessionist or a Tenth Amendment rebel claiming sovereignty of the states. There are still several steps that could be taken short of political independence and creating a state currency. They include:

1. Creating local and state complementary currencies;
2. Moving state tax and pension fund money from Wall Street to Vermont banks;
3. Sharing bank interest with the public;
4. Creating state and municipal banks;
5. Speculation fees on short-term financial transactions.

(Look for Part 2 of “Recovering Vermont’s Monetary Commons” in the fall issue of *Vermont Commons*.) •

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*Imagine, continued from page 1*

and Romansch. The Swiss cantons enjoy considerably more autonomy than do American states. One finds a host of local and regional cultures and traditions melded into a patchwork of sights and events that are considered “typically Swiss.” There appears to be less tension among competing cultures, religions, and cantons than one finds in the United States.

As Austrian economist Leopold Kohr once noted, the Swiss have solved their minority problems by “creating minority states rather than minority rights.” Switzerland has a coalition government with a rotating presidency, in which the president serves for only one year. Many Swiss do not know who of the seven Federal Councilors in the government is the president at any given time, since he or she is first among equals.

**Direct Democracy.** In Switzerland a petition signed by 100,000 voters can force a nationwide vote on a proposed constitutional change and the signatures of only 50,000 voters can force a national referendum on any federal law passed by Parliament.

Several cantons still follow the centuries-old traditions of *Landsgemeinde* or open-air parliaments each spring. Others are experimenting with voting over the Internet.

However, it is at the commune level that Swiss democracy is most direct. Within the cantons, there are 2,902 communes in the Swiss Confederation, each run by a local authority. Just as the cantons enjoy a high degree of independence from the



**Thomas Naylor, co-founder of the Second Vermont Republic.**

PETER MILLER

national government, within the cantons many of the communes also enjoy a high degree of independent authority and decision-making.

**Swiss Neutrality.** Switzerland has not been involved in a foreign war since 1515, and although it is heavily armed, it has remained neutral since 1815. It has never been part of a larger empire.

Swiss foreign policy is based on four premises: (1) Switzerland will never initiate a war. (2) It will never enter a war on the side of a warring party. (3) It will never side in any way with one warring

party against another. (4) It will vigorously defend itself against outside attack.

According to the Swiss constitution, every Swiss male is obligated to do military service; women are also accepted into the military service on a voluntary basis but are not drafted. In case of an attack on the country several hundred thousand men and women can be mobilized within a few days.

Even though Geneva is home to many agencies of the United Nations, only recently did the Swiss vote to join the U.N. Although the Swiss do trade extensively with member nations of the European Union, the Swiss citizenry has consistently rejected membership in the EU, even though the Berne central government favors membership.

Neutrality does not mean non-involvement. In terms of foreign aid contributed to Third World countries, the Swiss contribute nearly three times as much, as a percentage of the Gross National Income, as is contributed by The United States.

**Infrastructure.** Despite their fierce independence, Swiss towns, villages, and cantons do cooperate on major infrastructure projects involving the general public interest, including railroads, highways, tunnels, electric energy, water supply, and pollution abatement.

Many Swiss villages are linked by a network of passenger trains. Through efficient, high-quality railroads, village residents have easy access to neighboring villages as well as the larger cities such as Geneva and Zurich (both consistently ranked among the 10 best cities in the world in which to

*continued on page 8*



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*Imagine, continued from page 7*

live). The railroads provide a sense of connectedness to the rest of the country and to Europe as a whole.

**Humane Health Care.** In the highly decentralized Swiss health care system it is possible for patients, physicians, clinics, hospitals, and insurance providers to be in community with one another. Unlike in the United States, 95 percent of all Swiss citizens are insured against illness by one of 400 private health insurance funds. The Swiss health care system is second to none, as is demonstrated by the fact that the Swiss infant mortality rate is among the lowest in the world in contrast to that of the United States which compares favorably with Eastern European countries like Hungary, Poland, and the Slovak Republic.

**Quality Education.** Although the Swiss constitution stipulates that “the right to sufficient and free primary education is guaranteed,” there is no federal or national Department of Education. Rather, education is governed by the 26 different cantons. Swiss children are required by canton law to attend school. Kindergarten is voluntary and free. Some 99 percent of Swiss children attend kindergarten for at least one year, 63 percent for two. Instruction is given in the local national language, but each child also has the option to learn one of the other national languages. Those who plan to attend a university may go to one of three kinds of high schools specializing in either Greek and Latin, modern languages, or mathematics and science. Students who attend one of the seven public universities pay no tuition.

**Decentralized Social Welfare.** Swiss children are taught in small schools the virtues of self-sufficiency, hard work, cooperation, and loyalty to family and community. Since public assistance is funded locally, it pays off in visible ways for the community to discourage welfare dependency.

Aid plans are custom-designed with strict time limits. The objective is to help the client get back on his or her feet. For a few francs one can obtain any individual’s tax return – no questions asked. This helps keep welfare clients honest. Thus the Swiss practice what conservatives preach but rarely practice – complete decentralization of the responsibility for social welfare.

**Alpine Villages.** Scattered throughout the Swiss Alps and neighboring Austria, Bavaria, and Northern Italy are dozens of small villages. In most of these Alpine villages there is an inexorable commitment to the land. A gift of land from one’s parents carries with it a moral obligation of continued stewardship. Few would think of selling their land and leaving the village.

The church is often the center of village spiritual life, as well as social life. Friends meet at the market, the pub, the inn, the post office, and the churchyard to catch up on village news. The severe winters create an environment encouraging cooperation, sharing, and trust. The extraordinary beauty and the severity of the winters provide the glue which holds these communities together.

In these villages, in stark contrast to the rootless mobility that characterizes American life, one finds a sense of continuity where the genera-

tions are born, grow up, remain, and eventually die – a mentality that pervades all of Switzerland. Sustainable agricultural policies have made it financially viable for families to remain in the countryside. Conspicuously absent is the dilapidation, deterioration, and decay found throughout the American countryside – particularly in the rural South.

**Swiss Agriculture.** Even though only 4 percent of the Swiss people still live on farms, they manage to produce two-thirds of the foodstuff consumed annually by the entire country. So important is agriculture to Swiss culture, Swiss tourism, and ultimately the Swiss economy, that the Berne government has devised a creative system of direct payments to farmers over and above the income they receive from their produce. These payments remunerate the farmers for the services they are considered to provide to the population as a whole. These services include managing the rural landscape, managing the natural heritage, ensuring food supplies, and encouraging decentralization. Payments are made to farmers only if farm animals are kept under animal-friendly conditions, reasonable amounts of fertilizer are used, a suitable area is set aside for the maintenance of environmental balance, crops are rotated, soil quality is

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**In Switzerland, sustainable  
agriculture is neither left to chance  
nor to the market alone.**

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perfected, and plant-protection products are used sparingly. The sophisticated payment formula also takes into consideration the farmer’s age and income level, as well as the farm size and the number of farm animals. In Switzerland, sustainable agriculture is neither left to chance nor to the market alone.

Since small Swiss farms use fewer nitrates, pesticides, and herbicides, the Swiss wells and streams are much less likely to be contaminated than those in the United States. Swiss farmers have been pioneers in the field of environmental-friendly production methods, and serve as examples for other countries to follow. For example, recently Swiss voters passed a five-year ban on the use of genetically modified plants and animals in farming.

**Environmentalism.** Not surprisingly, there are not nearly as many federal government environmental regulations in Switzerland as there are in the United States. Concern for the environment originates at the village and canton level in Switzerland, not in Berne.

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**Neutrality does not mean non-involvement. In terms of foreign aid contributed to Third World countries, the Swiss contribute nearly three times as much, as a percentage of the Gross National Income, as is contributed by The United States.**

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Although acid rain has taken its toll on Swiss forests, water pollution – with a few notable exceptions – is rare. However, Switzerland and France have experienced disastrous Alpine road tunnel fires. Environmentalists oppose reopening these tunnels, arguing that heavy truck traffic pollutes the air and harms people and trees in areas of great beauty visited by many tourists. They insist that freight should be hauled in containers carried on trains rather than barreling through the Alps in convoys of polluting trucks.

Per-capita energy use in Switzerland is only 46 percent of that in the United States in spite of the harsh winters experienced in the Swiss Alps.

**Conclusion.** Switzerland is not Utopia, and certainly the Swiss are not without their critics. Some view them as arrogant, narcissistic, secretive, sexist, and xenophobic — the latter despite the fact that they live together peacefully with many foreigners, currently nearly 20 percent of the Swiss resident population.

Swiss banks came under attack in the 1990s for the way they handled deposits of World War II Holocaust victims as well as Nazi gold deposits. Zurich has big problems with both drug abuse and AIDS. The bankruptcy of Swiss Air was a major embarrassment, as was the air-traffic-control mishap over Swiss airspace that resulted in the midair collision of two jets.

The Swiss are under pressure from the European Union to join the club. Wall Street bankers don’t like the fact that Swiss banks don’t play by their rules. Washington recently fined the Swiss megabank UBS for allegedly aiding its American clients circumvent American tax laws through the use of secret Swiss bank accounts. UBS was coerced into providing U.S. officials with a long list of such accounts. Needless to say, the Swiss were unamused.

The inescapable conclusion engendered by a visit to Switzerland is that Switzerland works. It works because it is a tiny, hard-working, democratic country with a strong sense of community. An independent Vermont could do a lot worse than unabashedly emulating the Swiss model with the aim of becoming the Switzerland of North America. •

**Twelve Swiss-Based Principles for  
a Sustainable Free Vermont**

*Small is beautiful - Gold backed currency -  
Fiscal responsibility - International tax  
haven - Swiss federalism - Direct democracy -  
Neutrality – avoiding entangling alliances -  
Decentralized health care - Swiss railroads and  
infrastructure - Locally controlled schools -  
Decentralized social services - Sustainable  
agriculture, energy, and environment.*

# The Greenneck: Reckoning with Deepwater Horizon's "Junk Shot" *Ben Hewitt*



I suppose my favorite moment in the oil-spewing fracas that's dominated our nation's all-too-readily dominated attention over the past months was the moment I first heard that BP might attempt to stanch the flow with a slurry of shredded tires and discarded golf balls. The so-called "junk shot."

Oh my. The irony is almost too rich for my thin blood: An out-of-control oil well, puking

**You whisper it even as you load your reusable cotton grocery satchel with organic bananas and free trade French Roast. Drill, baby, drill. And so BP drilled. Hey, you asked for it.**

up earth's precious, destructive innards so that humanity might continue its wanton 21st-century bidding – and the only way we can stop it might be to cram the waste of said bidding down its throat? Excuse me whilst I go sit in my enormous, idling pickup, crank a little Ozzy ("Crazy Train," natch), and alternate between howling laughter and tears of desperation.

In the meantime, the flow continues unabated and BP finds itself at the center of a circle of blam-

ers that apparently couldn't recognize themselves in a mirror if they had a goddamn sticky note pasted to their forehead: Name (Ben). Age (38). Rank (American consumer). What? You still think BP was doing anything but playing their assigned role in the game of modern American life? I'll note that barely a month after the rig went down in flames, only a few days after the top kill/junk shot/oil murder attempt failed miserably, Ford posted a 23 percent sales increase over the year prior. The gain in *truck* sales? 48 percent. Wicked.

*Drill, baby, drill.* Even if you've never pumped your arm high in the air in time to Sarah Palin, you've said it. You've said it every time you climbed into your Prius (yes, even that time you drove it to the sustainable farming conference). You were practically screaming it every time you rode the chairlift last winter. You whisper it as you load your reusable cotton grocery satchel with organic bananas and free trade French Roast. *Drill, baby, drill.* And so BP drilled. Hey, you asked for it.

I suppose this is what collapse looks like: A culture so craven and desperate we're willing to accept any destructive inevitability to get a few sips of the go-juice. A corporation so addicted to profits (an average of \$45 million *per day* in '09; wicked!) it doesn't merely cut corners so much as shred them mercilessly. A society so unwilling to consider substantive change that we engage in serious discussion of a "green economy," as if we might skirt the truth merely by changing a few light bulbs, buying a hybrid, or installing a wood stove. As if we might grow our way into a culture and economy that absolves us of responsibility for



Deepwater burning in the Gulf. THE WORLD WIDE WEB.

that unchecked gusher of crude and those 11 dead rig workers. As if these weren't but the faintest of exclamation marks on the less-tangible devastation that plays out on a moment-by-moment basis across the globe at our behest.

You know what I love? I love a two-stroke dirt bike running wide open, that slung-out feeling of wicking through time and space like something that, once let loose, can never again be contained. I love the smell of chainsaw exhaust and the chips that collect in piles at my feet as I gather the winter's wood. I love the way the cadence of my truck's big eight-cylinder motor resonates in my chest and thrums in my ears. I love being able to climb in my car and drive anywhere, everywhere, for any reason at all. It's true: I am guilty. *Drill, baby, drill.*

But I will change. We all will, for there is no choice. A piece of me welcomes the change, and a piece of me dreads it, because I know it will be difficult and I fear it will be so in ways I cannot anticipate or even comprehend. The easy work is over. The self-delusion and deflected responsibility is a story of days past, a history as dark and slippery as oil floating on water. •

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looked pretty \_\_\_\_\_ ADJECTIVE \_\_\_\_\_ and the  
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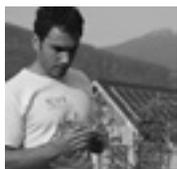
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## Homestead Security: Forget Peak Oil, Climate Change, and Economic Collapse for a Moment— It's the Chemicals that are Quietly Killing Us (Part I of II) Ben Falk

*"We are guinea pigs in a massive, uncontrolled, chemical experiment, the disastrous outcome of which is measured in disease and death."*

-- Dr. Rick Smith, Canada



About a month after the hole in the Earth began spewing oil and gas across the Gulf of Mexico on Earth Day I was swimming at one of my favorite spots in the Mad River – a stretch of mild rapids and green-blue water weaving around boulders through a small gorge. Though it was still May, it was the sixth or seventh day in a string of balmy days in the 80s, a spring that was becoming almost uncanny in sunshine, warmth, and light. Though the world news seemed to darken with each week this spring, this grotto of bedrock, hardwoods, and fresh water seemed strangely distant from catastrophe. Here was an almost giggling piece of the planet, flowing with a startling grace in spite of everything not well in this world.

I dove from a boulder into the current in a spot where I had done so a dozen times before. But this time, just after entering the water, I could see a metal rod pass below my stomach as I slid by inches above its rusty tip. I arched upward quickly and surfaced with the sensation you get when an 18-wheeler almost sideswipes you on a bicycle. I surfaced, my gut clenched from the near-skewering. A beautiful spot indeed, yet not without its manmade hazards. Thank you, ancestors.

This spot was no different from dozens of other former mill sites on this river. Abandoned iron gearing and rotting cement work littered the banks. Eroding stone walls which held mill buildings were being reclaimed by sumac, maple, and ash. This now-beautiful and only mildly dangerous place was not long ago an active industrial site. Yet now it seems to be a largely "natural" place, its legacy fading into the landscape with each passing decade.

People swim and play among this abandoned power plant and dozens like it across New England, pondering their past and their quaint legacy. How benign such industry was! Our children may swim

the Connecticut River at Vernon, looking upon the rotted-out infrastructure of the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant. Or in the Winooski next to the guaranteed-to-eventually leak landfill in Moretown with its batteries, paints, glues, and electronics leaching into the toxic muck at the bottom of the landfill, rain trickling through the

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**Here was an almost giggling  
piece of the planet, flowing with  
a startling grace in spite of  
everything not well in this world.**

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hundreds of feet of trash, washing this ooze into the river and the lake downstream. There won't be anything quaint about these legacies. Laos has its mountains of unexploded ordnance, America its minefields of concentrated toxic substances, from the lawn to the gas station to the dry cleaner to the landfill to the nuclear reactor.

Our parents and grandparents abandoned to us their mills, mines, and factories. We've done the same for our descendants, but far worse, for what we've left to them is orders of magnitude more toxic, abundant, and persistent. In the United States alone we are leaving our children with:

- 104 nuclear reactors in 31 states, operated by 30 different companies. Every single one "temporarily" storing high-level waste lethal for 10,000 to 24,000 years;
- 40,000 to 80,000 (exact number unknown) chemical factories producing or processing materials with multiple "compounds known to be carcinogenic and/or mutagenic";
- More than 40 weapons-testing facilities and 70,000 nuclear bombs and missiles;
- 104,000,000 cubic meters of high-level radioactive waste from weapons-testing activities alone;
- 925 operating uranium mines;
- 20-30 times the average historical background rates of mercury in rain;

- 2,200 square miles of excavated valleys and leveled mountains in Appalachia alone;
- 478,562 active natural gas mines in the U.S. in 2008, with 1,800 expected to be drilled in the Marcellus Shale of Pennsylvania alone in 2010;
- 18,433,779,281 cubic feet of trash per year, or 100,000 acres of trash one-foot deep per year, or about 250 square miles, with trash 400 feet deep.

(Many statistics from: <http://www.brookings.edu/projects/archive/nucweapons/50.aspx>)

Offshore drilling, natural gas mining, oil shale open pit mining, coal mountaintop-removal mining, metal and mineral ore mining (and the chemical industries to support these operations, from surfactants to metal-separating solvents) are accelerating rapidly. It took eons for the Earth to cool and for the array of toxic substances native to this planet to safely migrate out of the fragile biosphere and into the deeper layers of the planet. Only then could life emerge. The viability of Earth's thin biosphere, and our ability to live within it will correlate directly with how we manage this interaction between geosphere and biosphere.

But U.S. industry (and China's and India's) is just now beginning to stoke the engines that will drive the next century of extraction on this continent. Barring a 180-degree change in direction from the status quo, we will scavenge the American landscape (along with the newly accessible frontiers of the deep ocean and melting Arctic) for the remaining dirtiest and deepest fossil resources we haven't been able to access – and haven't needed to – until now.

It should not be surprising that America might turn its own landscape into a wasteland similar to those we have already created abroad. What empire has not eventually consumed its own internal resources after exhausting those outside its borders? The only way around this is disaggregating the empire before it can consume itself.

### How distant the future?

We don't know if this Oil Age Part II will last 20 years or 200. How long will it take for enough

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systems instability to accumulate that the industrial process itself weakens or breaks down? One can only hope for that time to come quickly. As has been noted before, it doesn't matter if there's 100 years of fossil resources left, or 1,000; the climate (and biological communities) simply can't handle the impact of that much ancient carbon so quickly entering the biosphere from the geosphere, or the contamination of water and soil caused by such massive geological processing.

And that's just a future scenario. We've already been introducing 1,000 new chemicals each year to the consuming public; Guinea pigs have been made of the American people for decades and we live with the human-health epidemics that go with it. But the future will be more acute: American industry is coming home, and it's gearing up to run on lower-grade, dirtier feedstocks.

The capacity of political systems at the national level to alter our course away from consuming the Earth's crust, toward a lifestyle system that operates on current solar income at the surface, is inadequate. The hole in the Gulf of Mexico and a thousand other incidents makes that much clear. The government will not stop this course of destruction, and the corporations won't.

So, what can you do at the home and local-community levels to deal squarely with the fact that your world and your children's will continue to become many times more toxic than it is today for the foreseeable future? The accumulating

planetary contamination from the past century of pollution is likely to dictate with increasing significance where we live, what foods we eat, how they are produced, how we die, and the quality of our lives. Our ability to resist toxicity, to maintain and develop ever-deeper levels of personal health, will be as crucial as any other way of being resilient in the face of existing and future challenges.

### Growing health and resistance, not just calories

*"Let food be thy medicine, and let thy medicine be food."*

– Hippocrates, 460 B.C.

As the local response to global resource-system collapse gains momentum the need to grow food at the household and neighborhood level is quickly being realized. This is important, but only half the work. Each year more of us fall victim to cancer, MS, ALS, Alzheimer's, asthma and the hundreds of other diseases that have causal factors, and oftentimes direct origins, in environmental sources. There will likely come a time when we will look back and realize that being fed was one thing, maintaining our health and vigor another – that calories and nourishment do not go hand in hand. As food author Michael Pollan has noted, we are the first generation to have obesity and malnourishment simultaneously. The medicinal value of our foods (and water) is easy to underestimate, but in an increasingly toxic world we are coming to realize that these provisions are our first and last line of defense against forces that erode our health. Food has long been humanity's primary medicine and will likely be so again out of sheer necessity.

How, then, do we obtain the most potent food-medicine? We must grow the plants (and fungi) ourselves.

### Soil

The productivity of a plant is largely determined by the health of the soil in which it is grown. The



**"2,200 square miles of excavated valleys and leveled mountains in Appalachia alone," and here's one of them – the scar of an abandoned strip mine in Fentress County, Tenn. With no thought to cleanup or erosion prevention, the polluted water runs into local streams and ruins them.** EARL DOTTER

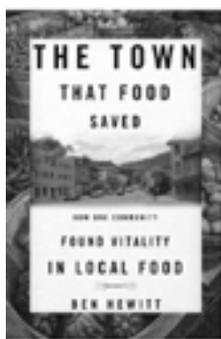
same applies to health-giving properties of that plant (or of an animal product). Soil health is the foundation upon which the health of the land/human community is built, so attending to soil restoration (because all of our soils are degraded) is necessarily the starting point.

Past issues of this column have dealt with this subject more deeply, but the long and short of it is this: increase organic matter (carbon), increase biological activity, and re-mineralize. All land-management practices in a health-giving ecosystem are rooted in promoting these three aspects of soil health. Such activities come naturally in the form of composting plant residues and returning them to the soil, minimizing tillage, adding and balancing minerals in the soil, promoting mycelium and bacterial communities, and promoting deep-rooting plants and root die-back events.

### Water

Each of us is mostly water. Water is washed through our system on a daily basis and is the medium through which we extract our nutrients in food. The basis of life on Earth more than any other single compound, water quality is no less important than all of the food in our diet. The best living water is spring water, followed by well water, all from protected watersheds (at least locally protected; none are protected from, and all are significantly contaminated by, atmospheric pollutants). Securing the best possible water source(s) (ideally more than one) and ensuring its protection is a top priority for every person wishing for personal health and long-term security.

*(These themes will be developed further in the fall issue of Vermont Commons' Homestead Security column.)*



**THE TOWN THAT FOOD SAVED**  
HOW ONE COMMUNITY FOUND VITALITY IN LOCAL FOOD  
BY BEN HEWITT

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*Voices of Independence, continued from page 1*

Their ranks include hoary old campaigners (“Bernie Sanders was my speech writer in 1971, the second time I ran for the Senate,” says Dennis Morrisseau of West Pawlet, candidate now for the Vermont Senate from Rutland County; “I go way back with Bernardo”), and neophytes persuaded by others, often Naylor and Morrisseau, that to believe in something is to stand for it.

“Personally, I’m at a point where I’ve been working in the sustainability industry trying to do local grassroots programs, and I keep hitting the wall,” says Gaelan Brown of Fayston, running for the Senate from Washington County. “I feel like I’m doing more complaining than actually doing anything productive. For me, this is a way to get real. Complaining doesn’t get into what really needs to change, and that’s our political landscape.”

“Independent” is a word unfortunately mis- and overused in politics (Joe Lieberman, the insurance industry senator from Connecticut, is an “independent”), and there have been a smattering of independent legislative candidates in Vermont who have declined affiliation with the Democratic, Republican, and Progressive parties.

But in these candidates – whose resumes and platforms, composed by themselves and submitted for this publication, begin on page 14 – “independent” has at least two meanings: They are independent of the mechanisms of Vermont’s established political parties, and they also stand for independence and vow to promote it.

Would that it were that simple. As independents in the fullest blush of the word, they are the proverbial unherdable cats, even in the matter of independence. Does it mean that if elected they will bring secession papers to the floor of the Vermont House or Senate? Some intend to do so; others meow at the edges, explaining that their priorities are to elevate to a central position in all policy decisions matters such as food independence, energy independence, economic independence, and independence from the “armed forces” that U.S. policymakers insist on sending to all corners of the world. Moving Vermont distinctly away from the U.S. thoroughfare in these matters is the first and more achievable goal, they believe. But if and when real independence – as in separa-



PHOTO SUPPLIED BY DENNIS STEELE

tion – enters the discussion in House and Senate chambers they will be voices to encourage it, or at the very least its entertainment.

And that’s something new in Vermont politics.

### Definitely a team, of sorts

“We’re perceived by people, especially people outside of Vermont, as being the best-organized [independence] movement in the country, which gives us a chuckle,” says State Senate candidate Robert Wagner of Ripton (Addison County). “We’re anything but organized. ‘Organized’ implies that there’s an organization.”

There was meant to be, but there is not. Apparently that comes with the territory when you’re dealing with true, *double-entendre* independents.

Rutland County’s Morrisseau conceived of a statewide “Senate30” campaign – a plan to contest every seat in the Vermont Senate with a candidate who would promote Vermont independence in all its ramifications. Morrisseau’s conviction is that the Senate is where the true political power lies.

“People in this country, most of them, don’t understand that the country and also the states are not run by the executives – the president or governor,” says Morrisseau. “They see the man at the head. But every day legislatures can and do tell the executive to go pound sand. They have the clear constitutional authority to do that. Every day you see the president or the governor running his mouth, but what gets done is what the legislature wants done. [The executive] can veto, so they’ve just got to get a couple more votes. It’s the law.”

Not only does political power reside in the legislative branch, Morrisseau asserts, but “that’s

also where you’ve got the great bulk of the real rot. That’s why lobbyists with all their corporate and banker money spend all their time there, and then take ‘your’ representative to dinner. Without you.”

A veteran of decades making this case against the U.S. Congress – employing, among other means, the website [firecongress.org](http://firecongress.org) – Morrisseau has recently turned his attention to Vermont. “I’ve always been interested in my own state,” he says. “I’ve been to a lot of places and I don’t see much that compares.”

He met Naylor in 2006 and was persuaded by Naylor’s argument for a Second Vermont Republic. He resigned after a brief tenure on SVR’s board, but he shared Naylor’s conviction that the movement needed to enter the electoral realm. “To me,” says Morrisseau, “you’re not serious unless you’re willing to put your butt on the line and say, ‘Yeah, I’ll stand.’”

Morrisseau’s vision was the Senate30 campaign, which he believed would expand from a small corps of Senate candidates who would recruit likeminded others in the independence network until all, or nearly all, the state’s Senate seats were contested in 2010.

In the event, it turned out differently. Independents were thinking independently, believing, as several have said, that people should run for the offices they’re comfortable running for. At least two (Todd Pritsky of Fletcher and James Merriam of Montpelier) will seek election to the Vermont House. Peter Garritano of Shelburne is running for lieutenant governor, and Dennis Steele of East St. Johnsbury is campaigning for governor. The latter two were explicitly courted by the movement’s founder, Thomas Naylor.

Steele runs a chess-playing web site with some 300,000 members, and with Naylor’s encouragement spread his technical expertise to another (music-related) venture called [freevermontradio.org](http://freevermontradio.org). It gives Vermont musicians an outlet for their art and Steele a platform for his political beliefs.

“My intention with the radio station was to help the movement move forward, to attract funding and get the message out about the Vermont independence movement,” says Steele. “Thomas felt that with what I was doing I would be a good candidate to run for governor.”

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Steele drove to Naylor's house intending to decline, but changed his mind. No longer skeptical, Steele became excited

"We had a straightforward, direct discussion about government using the Swiss model of decentralization, decentralized schools, foreign policy non-intervention. The Swiss haven't been in conflict since 1500. I said, this is brilliant."

Not long after, Naylor recruited Garritano for a try at the lieutenant governorship.

"He asked if I wanted to run for office and told me about Dennis Steele," says Garritano. "I went and met Dennis to see if we'd even get along, since we'd be, in a sense, running mates. I liked him, so that made it pretty easy to agree to do it."

"I asked my wife, and she was not particularly excited about it. She was worried about me making a fool of myself. I think that's what worries people the most [about standing for election.] I convinced her that I would do the best I could, that I'd research things I didn't know about and make a good, serious effort. Mainly because of Thomas Naylor I had been through a five-year awakening to the realities of our foreign policy and what was going on in the United States."

So "the movement," as it were, developed two prongs. Wagner, the Senate candidate from Addison County, watched it unfold.

"Thomas was in favor of a direct push at the executive," he says. "Dennis [Morrisseau] felt the real power is in the Legislature. The truth is probably a mélange of both those ideas. So we decided to go on with everything and support each other."

Morrisseau has not wavered from his certainty that the Legislature is the better battleground for independence candidates (and particularly the

**"Everyone in this fray is open to the idea of secession, one way or another, but there's a lot of range within that."**

**—Senate candidate Gaelan Brown**

Senate, which has fewer members than the House so is a more likely target for influence), but he's impressed by Steele and Garritano.

"They are damned fine young men," he says. "They're both handsome as hell and about nine feet tall. They are fine candidates. [But] you need to run as a group for where the power and the rot is. Running as a group you get noticed; run for every damn seat in the Senate and that's really noticeable." But, he adds, "Maybe they'll still notice us as eight, or whatever it will be, instead of thirty."

#### The big picture: What's at stake

As a group, the candidates do not articulate an identical platform – proof, again, of the flower of their independent-ness. But voters weighing their election options will know that the essential components of their philosophies are consistent, and that if some of these candidates make it into office things will be said under Montpelier's golden dome that have not been said, forcefully enough, to this point.

"Everyone in the fray is open to the idea of secession one way or another, but there's a lot of range within that," says Washington County's Senate candidate Gaelan Brown. "But the most

solid common ground is [as] a vocal antiwar political movement that sees the U.S. empire as the major obstacle to sustainability."

Steele agrees.

"We're the antiwar movement," he says. "We're the only thing going. Vermont's pro-rata share of the Defense Department's budget is \$1.5 billion. That's the gorilla in the room. Because of that \$1.5 billion I can make the Democrats and Republicans appear as the radicals because they're going to have to cut programs to meet that obligation. The Republicans are all for that anyway, and the Democrats will have to go along with it because they have to cut something. You have three generations of Vermonters who have grown up with these social programs. As an independent republic, I can say, we can take the \$1.5 billion and slowly transition ourselves, weaning off these programs to an extent or maybe keeping them. They're offering more of the same: cut programs; take everything out of Vermont for the empire."

Wagner and others emphasize sustainability, a not-unrelated topic as Steele's comments reveal. He is no Johnny-Come-Lately to the theme.

"There are those among us – including me – who feel that re-localizing the economy and the food supply is critical to surviving Peak Oil," he says.

Wagner claims that he has been computer-modeling the Infinite Growth Paradigm ("the belief that our economy has to keep growing in order to survive, that it can't maintain a static state") since the 1980s, and that every set of inputs he tries yields the same result – the disorientation and disintegration we are seeing today.

"It's like a biology experiment," he explains.

*continued on page 14*

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*Voices of Independence, continued from page 13*

“You add energy in a Petri dish and the population of whatever is in that Petri dish will keep growing. If you stop adding energy, that’s where the die-off starts.”

The word now in use for this unfolding phenomenon is “collapse” – and inevitably collapse will reach the biggest, most ravenous consumer of energy, the U.S., with its tentacles circumscribing the world. As Wagner and the others see it, this presents Vermont with a choice.

“Sooner or later, as the Empire breaks down, it’s going to be thrust upon us,” says Wagner. “Do we wait for it to happen, or do we get together before that happens and push for our independence in

a nonviolent way, knowing that violent actions invariably have terrible consequences.”

The 2010 independent candidates are no longer the only people expressing concern about Peak Oil and observing that the election of Barack Obama has produced, if anything, further proof that the U.S. is ungovernable – that the center can’t hold. Morriveau says that Vermonters know this, regardless where they fall on the political spectrum. He and Brown both contend that the right/left-liberal/conservative dichotomy, while not unreal, is a fire stoked by political and corporate operatives (media corporations included) to maintain power and – surprise, surprise! – make money.

How these candidates differ from others

who may be similarly awakening to reality is, as Garritano notes, “that we express more urgency – that things are going badly and we’re being led down a path that isn’t constructive to the country or the citizens of Vermont. We have to prepare for something that looks like it’s going to be a really rough ride.”

Hear now 10 candidates for Vermont political office who know they are outside the mainstream political construct in this unique state, but believe their message is not radical. It is bold, though, and they believe it’s the truth, and that those who allow themselves to listen will recognize it as the voice within their own heads.

## The 2010 Independence Candidates (So Far)

The statements and summaries below were provided by the candidates themselves, and are characteristically diverse in their presentations. Some were edited and condensed for space considerations, while the shorter submissions are printed virtually as received. They are listed alphabetically. These statements do not necessarily represent all of the “independence” candidates who will be running in 2010, but only those who responded to *Vermont Commons*’ invitation to participate in his feature.

### Gaelan Brown

**Residence:** Fayston  
Candidate for Vermont  
Senate, Washington  
County



I am a fourth-generation Vermonter living in Fayston with my wife and our school-age child. I am the vice-president of marketing for a national leader in solar power that is based in Vermont, and now I’m running for the Vermont Senate as an independent from Washington County.

Outside of my job, I am also leading a Transition Towns initiative in the Mad River Valley; I volunteer as the business manager for the *Vermont Commons*; *Voices of Independence*; I was a co-founder of the energy-education group known as the Carbon Shredders; and I write a regular column/blog on energy issues as “An Energy Optimist” for *Vermont Commons*.

I’m running for office because I believe that Vermont needs to become a “Lifeboat State” in the era of peak oil and continuing financial uncertainty. We need to invest in a re-localized food and energy economy and new financial systems to protect what Vermonters cherish most: our quality of life. I believe that sustainability will remain just an idea until Vermont is free to make our own decisions in terms of how we invest our tax dollars and how we regulate our commerce.

I believe that fiscal responsibility and social/environmental responsibility *must* go hand-in-hand, but today’s partisan political landscape in Washington, D.C., keeps these values divided. We also must confront the reality that Vermont cannot afford to invest in a transition to sustainability while also being forced to pay for perpetual global U.S.-military overstretch, escalating federal debt and endless corporate bailouts.

For example: With just one year’s worth of Vermont’s annual share of the U.S. military over-

stretch, Vermont could convert more than 25 percent of our homes to be fully powered by solar power, providing long-term energy security and productivity for generations to come.

I’m running for office because I love Vermont and I believe that Vermont can become a model of sustainability to the world once we stop allowing ourselves to be victimized by unconstitutional federal actions and irresponsible federal government policies. Vermont needs to stand up and say “no more!” No more war. No more corporate personhood. No more consumption-based insanity. No more centralized control of everything. No more erosion of our God-given inalienable rights as defined by the Constitution of the United States.

Sustainable business, decentralized government, and community responsibility are the principles that will guide my policy efforts if elected in November. My full positions on every major issue are explained in detail on my website and blog.

www.GaelanBrown.com  
GaelanB@gmail.com  
PO Box 1121, Fayston/Waitsfield, VT 05673  
802-272-0991

### Peter Garritano

**Residence:** Shelburne  
Candidate for Lieutenant  
Governor



My name is Peter Garritano. I am running for Lt. Governor as an independent candidate. I am married and have two kids, and I live in Shelburne. I love Vermont because of its natural beauty, and the friendly nature of the people who live here. People here want to live and let live, and I think this is a lesson that would serve us well in dealing with some of today’s important issues.

My passion in running for office came as a

result of the wars and the incredible human and economic toll they have taken on both the people of the Middle East and the citizens of Vermont. I don’t care why we invaded; we have been given an endless supply of dubious excuses. I do not want my tax money being used for war and killing.

It’s time to start a direct democracy, bottom up not top down, by the people and for the people, where important issues like war, and health care, and how our taxes are spent are voted on by the people of Vermont. Our elected officials have consistently failed us in all these areas.

www.vtgarritano.com  
802-999-6818

### Craig Hill

**Residence:** Wilmington  
Candidate for the Vermont  
Senate, Bennington  
County  
Age 60, father of three (two  
born, and all raised, in  
Vermont)



You have been betrayed. The current occupiers of the government of the United States have already soaked the planet with more than enough blood to account for their counterrevolution against the Constitution. They have issued and allowed 61 presidential diktats nullifying the constitutional ties that bind We their Victims to the agreement that is the United States of America, made united against them for their literally anti-American dictatorship of anti-constitutional declarations by their invention, invasive to these shores, of the Unitary Executive.

Having illegally seceded from constitutional law, they follow in the treasonous footsteps of their philosophical forefathers, the Old Confederacy, who rebelled against freedom itself in their now-unsuccessful attempts making the propertied

privileges of the inhuman corporate plantation paramount over the human rights of the individual that the Constitution was written to protect, and which only traitors think they can void.

Their secession from the Constitution *de facto* divorces free people from illegal alien rule. Their end of the agreement, by their usurpations, has been voided. Most of us do not know it yet, but we are now Vermonters first.

www.vermont-independence.info  
craigbhill@gmail.com  
802-989-6815

### Steve Laible

**Residence:** South Burlington  
Candidate of Vermont  
Senate, Chittenden  
County

No  
photo  
available.

My name is Steve Laible. Aside from completely agreeing with my colleagues Gaelan Brown and Robert Wagner, a leading priority for me is addressing our energy and resource needs. Redirecting subsidies for the oil companies toward clean and green technologies such as wind, solar, wave, geothermal, and biomass power is essential for positive change.

However, addressing how we move our vehicles, how we heat our homes, and how we power our factories does not address what resources we will use to build our vehicles, to construct our homes, and to make the products that come from our businesses and factories. After working in the construction industry for many years as a subcontractor, millwork sales specialist, and estimator, it breaks my heart to see house after house built with tree fibers and then wrapped in non-biodegradable, toxic petrochemicals such as paints and vinyl. All of our lumber, insulation, paints, caulking, and vinyl could be made from sustainable, non-toxic, biodegradable hemp. Even vehicles can be made from hemp as Henry Ford once did as issued in *Popular Mechanics* 1941.

To add insult to injury, if all of these products were made from hemp they would be stronger, more durable, and they would provide us with thousands of local jobs. All of which is a much better option than sending our young overseas to defend depleting resources, generating anger towards America and polluting our planet.

As a candidate for the State Senate I have put together a local music project called The Prohibition Blues Band to reiterate my position on these issues and help educate the public.

www.prohibitionbluesband.com  
steve.laible@yahoo.com

### James Merriam

**Residence:** Montpelier  
Candidate for the Vermont  
House, Washington-5  
District



I am a native Vermonter and a proud product of the Montpelier school system

and, more important, of the Montpelier community. I never cease to be amazed by or grateful for the optimism, kindness, and responsibility instilled by and manifest in that community.

I gave my MHS Valedictory address based on one entitled "American Imperialism," given, now well over 80 years ago, by my grandfather. This imperialism has seen the world militarized, commercialized, and dehumanized from long before he was born, and at an ever-increasing rate in the present day.

To counter that imperialism and make the resident of Montpelier relevant in her own decision-making process is, most concisely, why I am running.

Montpelier is a remarkable city in a remarkable state, a place where neighborly responsibility and community dialogue form rich connections among the remarkable people who reside in our tiny capital. The framework for a considerate, prosperous, and sustainable future exists already far more than in most any other part of the empire; we must simply step up and take the power and responsibility to use that framework.

To accomplish this I pledge myself in service to the city of Montpelier and the sovereign State of Vermont.

Long Live the Second Vermont Republic.

7jacobin@gmail.com  
4 Dunpatrick Circle, Montpelier, VT 05602  
(610)755-5875

### Dennis Morrisseau

**Residence:** West Pawlet  
Candidate for Vermont  
Senate, Rutland County  
Resume: Second Vermont  
Republic, Foreign Minister  
(Very); Chair of the  
"Vermont30" State Senate  
Campaign; Long ago,  
co-founder of Vermont's Liberty Union Party



This is my eighth and last political campaign. I am 67 and barely have enough fight left in me.

Statement: I have always been rebellious. I don't agree with or believe in or promote war or the "great man" theory of politics. We The People is what I believe in, and Nature, Freedom, Personal Responsibility, and Self-Government.

I was already a deep opponent of the Vietnam War in 1966 when I walked away from my scholarship at the University of Chicago Law School, knowing that the conflict would suck me in. But I had learned that "the law" was wholly political and I couldn't remain cloistered and scribbling away like a monk about nonsense while *the immoral event of my lifetime* (I thought then) was occurring and Americans were pouring into the streets in protest. I was forced into the Army, became an officer, and when the time came they seized me for anti-war actions inside the Army and ordered me to board a special aircraft bound for Vietnam. I refused, was arrested and court-martialed. But we beat the court martial and I was out, instead of imprisoned in Leavenworth Penitentiary for years.

Here is the fact we must face: "Representative" government – where elections rule and money rules elections, and we vote once in awhile – is the

worst government of all. And it happened on our watch. We are the persons responsible.

So I say, forget Empire and "Great Man" politics. Legislators make all laws, not presidents and governors, which are just diversions. Let's get real and *take our seats*. Meet our responsibilities. Make the laws here in Vermont for a short time.

In the end, I think all legislators ought to be chosen by lot, by a random draw of names from the general population every year or two. It's the same way we choose juries, and it works! But that requires a constitutional amendment (and tossing out all incumbents at least one time!) to accomplish. So let's get busy! Join us now. Free Vermont!

dmorso1@netzero.net  
Vermont30.net  
2LTMorrisseau.com  
FireCongress.org  
P.O. Box 177, West Pawlet, VT 05775  
802-645-9727

### Peter Moss

Resident: Fairfax  
Candidate for Vermont  
Senate (Franklin County)  
and U.S. Senate



#### On political corruption:

The Supreme Court falsely claims that money is "free speech" and entitles corporations to use unlimited bribes. My solution: The Vermont Fairness Doctrine, which would divide all available funds in equal amount among the candidates for each office and provide equal media access in campaigning. Enact single-term limits. Provide capability for every voter to propose legislation.

**On war:** Diplomacy, not occupation; international sanctions, not bombing. Recall Vermont's National Guard from foreign occupations, and secede if the military-industrial complex prevents that. Beef up homeland security as necessary.

**On health care:** The U.S. and Vermont have no health care problem; we have a for-profit, private insurance problem. Vermont should issue business permits only to insurers who will compete with Medicare's 97-percent benefits to 3-percent administrative-costs ratio.

**On Vermont Yankee:** Close it in 2012 and pursue clean, safe energy options. Send spent fuel for safekeeping in the basement of Entergy headquarters in Louisiana.

**On party politics:** Who needs two capitalist parties? The Bohemian Club. Meet the "bohos" at <http://tinyurl.com/4qnu3>, some 2,000 rich and powerful men who make U.S. policy. The three branches of government exist mainly to fill the media with "news" and keep the bohos out of the public eye. My solution: Teach economic democracy in school, and encourage kids to question why the U.S. wastes blood and treasure in foreign lands while some Americans are hungry, homeless, or unemployed, and bankers give each other billions in bonuses before repaying their bailout debts to taxpayers.

**On justice:** Courts protect the rich and powerful. Judges dismiss meritorious complaints by summary judgment or bench trials without a

*continued on page 16*

*Candidates, continued from page 15*

jury. My solution: Teach *pro se* procedure in high school and demystify the legal process so that citizens will have sufficient legal skills when they become employees, consumers, homeowners, tenants, taxpayers, etc. Jury-only trials would provide better justice and the elected foreperson can preside better than a career judge.

If you are upset by any or all of the above, you can do something come November 2, 2010. Never re-elect incumbents; vote for independents only and demand a single-term term limit. When that is done, you will have peace, prosperity and justice, but not before.

peter28moss@gmail.com  
<http://petermoss.org>  
 P. O. Box 413, Fairfax, VT 05454  
 Phone/ fax: 802-849-2108  
 (see my book, available from Amazon.com)

### Todd Pritsky

**Residence:** Cambridge  
 Candidate for the Vermont  
 House; district combines  
 areas of Fletcher, Fairfield,  
 and St. Albans Town



I am a partner, a father, a photographer, a professor, an animal lover... Sometimes one cannot be boiled down to a single adjective, political or otherwise.

As an independent I recognize that I will have to work together with Republicans, Democrats, Progressives, liberals, moderates and conservatives. I have my opinions and am not afraid to passionately express and act upon them, but also know that if we're to do what's best for Vermont, we need to approach each other in good faith.

My partner Ericka and our son Sam are the main reasons I am running. I have spent several years advocating change in Washington, lobbying Congress and the administration, trying to foster peace and justice at home and abroad. Lately my focus has shifted more within our state because this is where our children will grow up and where I can be more effective creating an environment in which they can thrive and raise their own children.

Vermont often leads the nation on so many issues, and I want to help carry on this tradition by representing Fletcher, Fairfield and St. Albans Town. Together we can promote sustainability, peace, and justice that our state and the rest of our country desperately needs.

web: <http://www.toddforvthouse.com/>  
 twitter: <http://twitter.com/Todd4VTHouse>  
 facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/todd4vthouse>  
 snail mail: 215 Bog Rd., Cambridge, VT 05444  
 phone: 802-238-3436

### Dennis Steele

**Residence:** East St. Johnsbury  
 Candidate for Governor



**Resume:** Dennis Steele is a fifth-generation Vermonter and Northeast Kingdom businessman who recently launched the highly successful Internet radio station, Radio Free Vermont. Organized to promote Vermont music and Vermont musicians, Radio Free Vermont now has listeners in over 120 countries worldwide. In 2003 Dennis started what has become a very popular chess-playing website, used by more than 200,000 people worldwide, of which he is sole owner and CEO.

After spending three years in the U.S. Army and a number of years in Hawaii and California as a sales executive, Dennis, his wife, and two children moved back to his hometown of Kirby, Vermont, in 2006. Since that time Dennis has been an active supporter of the Second Vermont Republic and the Vermont independence movement.

Mr. Steele has a B.A. from Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, California. He has been the recipient of numerous academic and military honors. He participates frequently in community affairs. An avid hunter, Mr. Steele often processes the family's meat himself.

The theme of Dennis's gubernatorial campaign is "Imagine... Free Vermont."

Statement: If elected governor of Vermont, I pledge to lead Vermont out of the Union and seek election as the President of the Second Vermont Republic. I further pledge to:

1. Do everything within my power to bring home the Vermont National Guard troops from Iraq and Afghanistan immediately.
2. Block all future deployment of the Vermont National Guard.
3. Convene a statewide convention to consider articles of independence calling for the return of Vermont to its status as an independent republic as it once was between 1777 and 1791.
4. Work with the Vermont Legislature and the UVM College of Medicine to develop a Vermont-based, decentralized health care system modeled after the Swiss health care system.
5. Introduce a precious metal-backed currency for Vermont.
6. Negotiate a new electric energy contract with Hydro Quebec to provide sufficient power to compensate for the shortfall which will be created by closing the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant by 2012.
7. Commission UVM to develop a system of agricultural subsidies similar to the system in Switzerland to encourage more Vermonters to go into sustainable agriculture.
8. Bring back locally financed and locally controlled public schools.
9. Promote trade and travel between Vermont and neighboring states and countries.

Please help us save Vermont, America, and the rest of the world from the American Empire, by joining our genteel revolution and helping Vermont lead our nation into peaceful disunion. Long live the Second Vermont Republic!

radiofreevermont@gmail.com,  
<http://www.governorsteele.com>.  
<http://www.freevermontradio.org>  
<http://www.governorsteele.com>  
 P.O. Box 28, E. St. Johnsbury, VT 05838.  
 802-748-3475

### Robert Wagner

**Residence:** Ripton  
 Candidate for Vermont  
 Senate, Addison County



My name is Robert Wagner, a Vermont homesteader in a small mountain community called Ripton, with two children. We have learned to grow our own food, and now I'm running for the Vermont Senate as an Independent for Addison County.

I'm running because I'm out there every day, talking to people, and getting an earful. People are upset about the wars, the deepening debt, and also interested in the possibilities offered by a free Vermont. People are putting the issue of independence truly and legitimately on the table.

I'm running because of the political machine that passes public office back and forth between Republicans and Democrats, the machine that steals everything in Vermont that isn't nailed down, the machine that takes away teachers' pensions, consolidates schools, and cuts public transport. The machine is now shutting down services, and pouring Vermont's rich resources into the ongoing wars and into Wall Street.

UVM already documented this giant give-away: over \$1.2 billion yearly in Vermont's sovereign wealth, extracted tax-free by corporations. And then there's Vermont's \$1.5 billion yearly share in the wars. The bailouts, the federal debt. Our continued membership in the U.S. Empire is bleeding us dry.

I care deeply about Addison County and Vermont, because it's my home. The endless wars can stop, but first Vermont has to stop financing them, and keep the money in our communities. There is a way to make a sustainable Vermont through local food production and distribution, local green energy, and local governance. We must bravely face the future, imagine and create a free Vermont.

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## Transition Times: Vermont On Track To Be First Transition State *Carl Etnier*



Noted Peak Oil author Richard Heinberg quietly visited Vermont in April and spoke in Montpelier at a day-long gathering of the state's Transition Town leaders. It was apparently the first time any state had gathered its Transition leaders for a conversation, and Heinberg told the nearly 70 people assembled in the sparsely decorated church basement that Vermont has the potential to lead the way in the U.S., becoming the first "Transition state."

That means, according to Heinberg, clearly communicating that times are tough for everyone and will be getting tougher, bridging political differences, and building strong, resilient communities.

The gathering was a step in that direction. Vermont's Transition Towns strengthened their bonds at the gathering and even started planning a yearly theme for the Towns to cooperate on.

The planners of the gathering (disclosure: I was one of them) boiled down the day's goals into three questions:

- How can we get to know, inspire, and support each other?
- How can we create a collaborative vision for a post-oil Vermont?
- How can we reach beyond state borders and work regionally, nationally and internationally?

The participants had different levels of success with the three questions, which were addressed in an afternoon discussion using the free-wheeling "open space" format. (See The Transition Handbook for an explanation of "open space.")

Before the open space started, the day's program partly answered the question of how to get to know, inspire, and support each other. Paul LeVasseur of Transition Putney led an exercise in the morning to acquaint people from different Transition Towns with each other and the successes of their groups. Kathryn Blume of Transition Charlotte inspired us with a song by the Yorubans of Nigeria, with lyrics that translate, "What the creator has made can never be destroyed." The group sang it three times that day, learning it well enough even to improvise harmonies to the melody that most hadn't heard before.

A potentially multi-year strategy for inspiring and supporting each other came out of one of the open-space groups. Each year, they decided, participating Transition Towns will include in their work a statewide theme. A possible example was drawn from the work of Post-Oil Solutions in Brattleboro: working for every town having a farm with community-supported agriculture (CSA) shares. Participants formed a group to decide on the 2010-11 goal and plan a September meeting to launch the work.

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The September date was chosen so that Transition Towns could prepare theme-related actions for 350.org's carbon-cutting "Global Work Party" on 10/10/10.

Many of the open-space groups addressed ways to "create a collaborative vision for a post-oil Vermont." Several discussed how to incorporate Transition action items into town plans, which are revised every five years. Mapping skills also came up in several groups: developing geographic maps and/or lists of people with skills that will be useful as the global economy shrinks. For example, who knows how to tan hides, or weave, or run a textile mill?

A number of secessionist candidates for state senate attended and voiced their vision of a post-oil Vermont. Otherwise, the focus was largely on local actions and politics. Running

for local office was often mentioned as a way to speed the Transition in our communities.

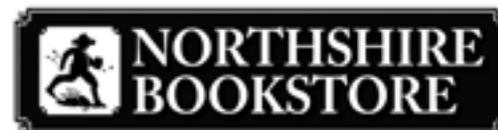
However, an energy group highlighted the resources available in existing statewide networks and projects such as Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network (VECAN), the network promoting municipal Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) programs, and the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund's Renewable Energy Atlas.

The gathering's final question, of how to work with others outside Vermont, was most concretely addressed through the plan to participate in 350.org's 10/10/10 Global Work Party.

Keep an eye on [TransitionVermont.ning.com/events](http://TransitionVermont.ning.com/events) for word of the date and place of the September gathering on Vermont's 2010-11 statewide theme.

Thanks to the many note-takers at the gathering whose efforts made it possible for me to get an overview of discussions in break-out groups I didn't participate in. •

### Running for local office was often mentioned as a way to speed the Transition in our communities.



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## Vermont Vox Populi: The Politics and Practice of Sustainable Living

An Interview with Chelsea Green Publisher Margo Baldwin *Rob Williams*

Find out more about Chelsea Green at [www.chelseagreen.com](http://www.chelseagreen.com).



**Before we dive in, I've gotta ask a burning question. Your publishing house, Chelsea Green, is publishing Bill Kauffman's book on secession movements in the United States this summer. Was there much "in house" discussion about Chelsea Green publishing a book on this topic? What do you want our readers to know about Kauffman's book?**

**Margo Baldwin:** Yes, there was some discussion about it. His book will interest a different audience than our normal progressive politics book. I think that's fine, as we don't necessarily have to adhere to any kind of strict party line. Also, there is a lot to be said about scale, which Kauffman under-

**We are not in the publishing business to turn trees into paper; we're in the business to change the world.**

stands. He's a "small is beautiful" advocate and so are we. The left tends not to get this. They see big government as the solution.

Kauffman's book is provocative and, by examining the various secession movements around the country, shows us that this is not a traditional left/right issue. It's a big/small issue; a national/local issue; an unsustainable-empire issue.

And in the end, it's not going to matter what we think about it when collapse kicks into high gear; things (like the US of A) will just start breaking apart. It happened very quickly in the Soviet Union, so I'm not sure why that can't happen here. Already we're seeing local governments unable to provide essential services. What's happening in the Gulf with the oil spill is catastrophic. California is bankrupt; so is New York State. So what's going to happen if we have a few more of these events, an earthquake in L.A., a hurricane in the Gulf, a Euro collapse, escalating home foreclosures and bank failures?

As the authors of *Limits to Growth* always said, it's not one thing that sends us into overshoot, its multiple crises and our inability to cope with them all at the same time. We're starting to see that happen now so we'd better start preparing the lifeboats, as Michael Ruppert calls them.

**And he identified the entire state of Vermont as the biggest "lifeboat" he is aware of. Let's talk about Michael Ruppert's tour, which your publishing company, Chelsea Green, co-sponsored, because you publish his new *COLLAPSE* book and distribute the acclaimed documentary of the same name. What were your impressions of Vermonters' responses to Ruppert's *COLLAPSE* tour this past May? Do Vermonters seem to be waking up to the reality of an imploding U.S. Empire?**

**MB:** I thought he got a great reception. Yes, Vermonters seem to be ahead of the curve on the coming collapse and unsustainable empire. Not

sure they are ready for secession, but they understand peak oil and the necessity for creating a sustainable alternative.

**So being a Vermont-based book publisher must be an interesting gig right now. What kinds of changes in the publishing world are you seeing, and how is that impacting your work at Chelsea Green?**

**MB:** The entire book business (the entire media business) is being turned upside down right now. Brick-and-mortar stores (both independent and chains) are going out of business and there is a rapid shift to digital books. Amazon and Apple and Google are shooting it out for dominance, and most smaller players are watching with horrified amazement on the sidelines.

Basically, the shift to digital books impacts everything we do, including editorial acquisitions, production processes, marketing and sales, and distribution. We are trying to figure out how to maneuver in this environment. In many ways we are better positioned than many other publishers because we are niched and because our content is so well-suited to living in these times.

But it's unnerving, to say the least. I'm not sure what kinds of people I should be hiring, and find that any new hire should be technologically adept. It feels like we've become a technology company instead of, or in addition to, being a book publisher. It's also extremely challenging to keep the old business going at the same time as we try to invent the new one, which will be much more of a b-to-c (business to consumer) vs. a b-to-b (business to business) one.

**Can you speak to Google's attempts to digitize the world's books? What do you make of this, as an independent book publisher?**



Margo Baldwin, Chelsea Green publisher. SUPPLIED BY CHELSEA GREEN

**MB:** I think that Google, like Apple and Amazon, is out to try to monopolize content for their own purposes. What they did and are doing is illegal, and the proposed settlement is their attempt to rewrite copyright law so that they have a monopoly over all the "orphaned" works.

**You've seen a lot of changes in the past few decades. How did you come to book publishing?**

**MB:** When Ian and I left New York City and moved to Vermont 28 years ago we quickly understood that we would have to create our own livelihoods up here. Ian had been an editor in a prior incarnation, but I had never done anything in publishing. We thought it sounded fun and interesting to start a publishing company (little did we know what we would be up against!) and plunged in, raising the original capital from friends and family. We started



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the company while living on the south green in Chelsea, hence the name.

We thought we could be generalists, but also quickly found out that we would need to specialize to stay in business. The environment and sustainability were key areas of interest for both of us, and we gradually became focused on that. Our very first book was *The Man Who Planted Trees*, by Jean Giono and illustrated by Michael McCurdy, a perennial bestseller and a book that is still selling after 26 years. It is that book that set the tone for our mission and editorial focus.

**Speak to that. Chelsea Green has a very distinctive mission and approach. Why is this important?**

**MB:** We are not in the publishing business to turn trees into paper for its own sake; we're in the business to change the world. Our mission, expressed by our tag line – *The Politics and Practice of Sustainable Living* – seeks to combine the practical aspects of sustainable living, the green know-how of green building, renewable energy, organic agriculture, eco-cuisine, and simple living, with the more political and inspiring narratives of people out to change the world. We are able to attract people who believe in our mission, and able to be part of the community, not just trying to sell books. We consider ourselves to be a social enterprise that is focused on a triple-bottom-line approach to business, where people, place, and profit are all taken into consideration.

**Vermont has the highest literacy rate, per capita, of any state in the U.S. Are Vermonters reading more books these days? What's your sense?**

**By examining various secession movements around the country, Bill Kauffman's book shows that this is not a traditional left/right issue. It's a big/small issue; a national/local issue; an unsustainable-empire issue.**

**MB:** I have no idea, but I doubt it. In general, people everywhere are reading fewer books. They are doing a lot of reading but it's often on-line. I don't know where Vermonters are on this continuum.

**What of digital media? How are new media tools like Facebook and Twitter interfacing with your work as a publishing house?**

**MB:** We are considered a leader in using social media and have one of the largest twitter followings of any publisher. Still, it's hard to know exactly how to measure the effects of all this. I'm sure it works to help get the word out about our books and authors, but does it lead to book sales? That's a lot harder to measure.

**What about e-books? Are you feeling any squeeze or pressure from Amazon's Kindle and other e-book readers, in terms of price-point per book, etc.?**

**MB:** Not directly, but there is a lot of uncertainty about how to price e-books. We know that we need to experiment with books at different price points to see what happens. It could be that lower prices will lead to greater sales, or not. E-book sales do seem to be impacting printed book sales, but so far it's a small percentage.

**What books are you reading these days?**

**MB:** I do a lot of my reading these days by listening to audio books in the car. The current book is *Matterhorn*, a novel about the Vietnam war. I'm also working my way through all of John Irving's novels. In terms of nonfiction, I mainly read our books in early draft-manuscript form and don't have time to read much else. I scan a lot online.

**I have to ask: Are you in support of Vermont's nonviolent secession from the United States as Empire, and its reinvention as an independent republic?**

**MB:** Yes, although I prefer to talk about it as getting the United States out of Vermont, not Vermont leaving the United States. Just like the Native Americans were here first and have a claim to their territory, I feel like Vermonters have a claim to their own home ground and should not "go" anywhere. The Empire needs to just leave us alone and stop demanding that we pay for endless unjustified wars and oppression of other peoples.

**Thanks for all of the remarkable books you've given us these past many years, and good luck with the changes ahead.**

**MB:** Thank you. •

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## Localvore Living: Maintaining the Balance—Old World Ways vs. Modern Technology

Robin McDermott



This past March, I went on a culinary tour of Tuscany that was led by Doug Mack and Linda Harmon of The Inn at Baldwin Creek. With the fabulous connections that Doug and Linda have in that region, the tour was off the beaten path and brought us in contact with land stewards, wine producers, farmers, and slow-food leaders. We ate amazing food, but it was the stories that came with each meal that left a lasting impression on me.

The Tuscany that I saw was similar to current-day Vermont in many ways. Even with the cachet of that region of Italy, it appears that there is an on-going struggle between maintaining Old World traditions and the practical realities of competing in a global market. Artisan food producers are finding their work a difficult balancing act, walking the fine line between hand-crafted food production and earning a reasonable living.

The cornerstone of our trip was the three days we spent at Tenuta di Spannocchia, just southwest of Siena. Spannocchia is like the Shelburne Farms of Tuscany, with a full working farm, guest accommodations, an educational mission and a strong conservation ethic. Just as Shelburne Farms is known for its cheddar cheeses, Spannocchia is gaining a reputation in the region for its salumis produced from heirloom Cinta Senese pigs. During a salumi tasting at the farm we learned about the revival of the Cinta Senese pigs, an heirloom breed of swine that has been around since at least the 14th century yet was all but extinct 10 years ago. These black pigs with a white band that reminds me of belted galloways roam freely in hundreds of acres of forest and live off of the land for two years while getting up to market weight. The combination of diet and exercise and the genetics of the breed itself produce a lean meat marbled with a flavorful melting fat that is ideal for prosciutto, salami, and lardo.

Take a walk through the paths and dirt roads at Spannocchia and you are bound to spot some Cinta Senese rooting through the forest, much like you would have seen 300 years ago when peasant farmers depended on the cured meats from these low-maintenance/low-cost animals for survival. But this breed takes twice as long to get to weight than more modern varieties, which has led Spannocchia farmers to experiment with cross-breeding the Cinta Senese pig with the faster-growing Great White. The result is a mature pig ready for slaughter in one year, compared with two years for the pure Cinta Senese pigs. Because prosciutto takes two years to cure, the jury is still out on whether the “half-breeds” produce the same quality meats as the purebreds. But the folks at Spannocchia are hopeful that this experiment will enable them to offer a comparable product at a more attractive price.

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**The Tuscany that I saw was similar to Vermont in many ways. Artisan food producers are walking the fine line between hand-crafted food production and earning a reasonable living.**

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On our last evening in Italy we visited a 3,000-tree olive grove and had dinner at the home of the grove's owners, Janet Shapiro and her husband Stephano. Janet and Stephano are passionate about their work and produce, without a doubt, the best olive oil I have ever tasted. Many of the trees in their groves are hundreds of years old, planted in irregular rows that make mechanical harvesting impossible. Like many owners of small, artisanal olive groves, Janet and Stephano are in their mid-fifties and their grown children live in other countries with no interest in carrying on the back-breaking work of producing olive oil. Each year it is more challeng-

ing to corral enough friends and neighbors to pick olives from their 3,000 trees at exactly the right time. It wasn't surprising to hear Janet, an earthy San Francisco-born ex-pat, say that if she were planting an olive grove today the trees would be spaced to accommodate mechanization. Like the folks at Spannocchia, Janet and Stephano have found that they simply are not able to make a living producing food using the same techniques that worked for peasant farmers growing food to feed their families.

Here in Vermont, we are seeing a similar story unfold as farmers are blending centuries of New England farming practices with modern technology. High-tunnel greenhouses, plastic mulch, and mechanical harvesting are just a few examples of tools and techniques that are enabling our farmers to efficiently deliver local food at a reasonable price. I applaud the many small family farms throughout Vermont that are successfully balancing scale and technology and feeding us so well. •

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## Energy Optimist: A FIT For Energy Independence *Gaelan Brown*



Everyone envisioning a clean-energy future in the U.S. or Vermont should know that the best policy to create real cost-effective and fast deployment of renewable energy is what is known as a feed-in-tariff, or FIT. A FIT is the only policy that removes the monopolistic

corporate controls over the utility grid and allows anyone to effectively become a power company with cost-effective renewable energy.

A FIT is simply a rule that power companies *must* allow consumers to become independent renewable energy producers, feeding their energy into the grid, in exchange for a guaranteed price that helps renewable energy catch up to the decades of subsidies that fossil fuels and nuclear power have had.

**I support appropriate high-speed internet expansion in Vermont, but distributed renewable energy should have a much higher priority.**

Ironically, with all the hype over government incentives and the “green economy,” the one policy that is not even being discussed in D.C. is a national FIT. It’s not even on the table. In D.C. it’s all about preserving utility monopolies, more complex tax regulations that limit the residential market to people with tax liability, and a proposed carbon-taxation market as the funding mechanism to keep the subsidies limping along.

So Vermont will have to craft its own energy policy, while somehow still shouldering the cost

of being part of the United States (we pay \$1.5 billion per year just for our share of the U.S. military budget).

Thanks to a lot of work by Vermont’s renewable-energy industry leaders, who have spent many years educating and lobbying the Legislature, Vermont was the first state in the U.S. to create a FIT law, in May 2009. This was groundbreaking progress – except that the program was capped, which has limited its effectiveness.

An un-capped FIT in an independent Vermont would eliminate the complex, ever-changing labyrinth of state and federal tax credits, rebates, and renewable energy “credits,” which require renewable energy developers to pay for fulltime accountants and lawyers to make sense of it all, along with teams of administrators to process the incentive paperwork (all representing tedious cost increases for a system – the feed-in tariff – that is designed to *reduce* costs).

An un-capped, differentiated FIT in Vermont would create a clear and predictable return on investment for renewable energy, causing capital to pour into the development of these systems, creating thousands of Vermont jobs. And by the time Vermont derived 30 percent or more of its electricity from FIT projects, the cost of nuclear- and fossil fuel-based energy will exceed the price of renewable energy; therefore a FIT will provide long-term savings and energy-stability for Vermont.

Interestingly, the rates that new renewable-energy projects get can be adjusted as the costs and benefits change relative to conventional power sources. This would prevent the FIT from becoming a “boondoggle” or burden to ratepayers.

Germany’s FIT created 300,000 green-collar jobs, and within a few years contributed to Germany’s power grid becoming 16-percent clean, local renewable energy, while the average annual increase in cost of power to homeowners



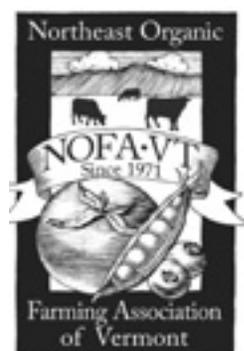
**A FIT concept.** Vermont’s Net Metering law permits people who generate a portion of their own electricity to “run the meter backwards,” sending excess power back into the grid and receiving a credit from their utility. This meter at a central Vermont home connects to a solar array. WILL LINDNER

was less than \$50. In Denmark, 23 percent of the power in the grid is domestic renewable energy from FIT projects, and the conservative political party in power has an official policy of massive deployment of renewable energy specifically to save money and protect the economy from ever-increasing energy costs from fossil fuel and nuclear sources.

Let me say that again: *the conservative right-wing political party that now controls Denmark is focusing on renewable energy to protect their economy from energy-price increases.*

Paul Gipe, a world-renowned expert on effective renewable energy policy, gave a presentation as the keynote speaker at a recent Renewable Energy Vermont (REV) conference devoted to reviewing

*continued on page 22*



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*Energy Optimist, continued from page 21*

Vermont's FIT. He gave Vermont a grade of D on the global scale compared to successful FIT programs in other countries, although Vermont was the only U.S. state that he gave a passing grade. Vermont's test-FIT gets a low grade because:

- It was capped at 50 megawatts – less than 5 percent of our demand – so there is no real investment or permanent job creation. The program was really just a “toe in the water” test to take a baby-step in the right direction.
- It is available only to large-scale systems, because anyone doing this must spend \$200,000 in interconnection fees to the utility along with large annual interconnection fees after that. The power companies say these fees are to cover their cost of accepting “intermittent power” from renewable energy including electrical engineering systems. The truth is that Germany and Denmark have made it the law that power companies have to allow anyone to feed clean energy into the grid, and those countries *don't* have these fees.

Dave Lamont of the Vermont Public Service Board (VPSB) was on the “lessons learned” panel at the REV event. He concluded that the FIT was a bad idea for Vermont because it would increase Vermonters' rates without any real benefit. Peak Oil and peak natural gas didn't enter his calculus. (Nor does he factor the hidden cost of the U.S. wars for oil security.) Status quo! Full steam ahead! The VPSB and many Vermont politicians do not grasp the opportunity presented by investing in decentralized renewable energy. The eventual impact of making every Vermont home a mini power-generating station, feeding into the grid, is almost beyond calculation in terms of jobs and energy security.

Many Vermonters think we can and should march along toward a “smart-grid” Jetsons fantasyland (where everyone will have a washing machine and fridge that automatically turn on when power from the grid is cheaper, thereby creating “grid-efficiency”) *before* we deploy major in-state renewable energy. I support appropriate high-speed internet expansion in Vermont, but distributed renewable energy should have a much higher priority. If Vermont is going to survive and prosper during the next 20 years, it needs to get



**19th- and 21st-century technology in peaceful coexistence: Solar panels atop a covered bridge.** SUPPLIED BY GAELAN BROWN.

serious about domestic renewable energy production as a top priority.

If you don't think having domestic, renewable energy supply is a sovereignty issue for Vermont, I suggest you talk to people in Ukraine and Cuba and find out what it was like when their foreign energy sources were suddenly disrupted.

This is a primary reason that I'm running for the Vermont Senate from Washington County in November (I got my petition in, I'm on the ballot): Vermont needs to become a lifeboat-state focused on sustainability and sovereignty. “More of the same” in Vermont politics is not going to get us there. •

**Vermont's test-FIT was capped at 50 megawatts – less than 5 percent of our demand – so there is no real investment or permanent job creation, just a baby-step in the right direction.**



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Peter Miller

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And have you read *Vermont People*, *Vermont Farm Women*, *Vermont Gathering Places*, *People of the Great Plains*, *The First Time I Saw Paris*?

They are also by Peter Miller of Colbyville. Was the *Burlington Free Press* misdirected when they named this photographer and writer Vermonter of the Year? Was the state legislature bamboozled into honoring this so-called artist with a proclamation? Were his books bad enough to win four national awards? Why is he shunned by the Vermont literary mafia? Why does *Vermont Magazine* put a disclaimer next to his column on the Vermont secessionist movement?

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## Secession Briefs: Nullification *Jonathan Stevens*



*“The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government are few and defined. Those which are to remain in the State governments are numerous and indefinite.”*

James Madison, Federalist 45

### What is nullification?

Nullification is a constitutional theory that recognizes the sovereign right of a state to declare null and void any law

passed by the United States Congress which the state deems unacceptable and unconstitutional. Nullification is not secession or insurrection. Nullification is not something that requires any decision, statement, or action from any branch of the federal government. Nullification is not dependent on a favorable court ruling. Nullification is not the petitioning of the federal government to start doing or to stop doing anything. Nullification doesn't depend on any federal law being repealed. Nullification does not require permission from any person or institution outside of one's own state.

Nullification begins with a decision made in your state legislature to resist a federal law deemed to be unconstitutional. It usually involves a bill, which is passed by both houses and is signed by your governor. In some cases, it might be approved by the voters of your state directly, in a referendum. It may change your state's statutory law or it might even amend your state constitution. It is a refusal on the part of your state government to cooperate with, or enforce, any federal law it deems to be unconstitutional.

It was first employed by South Carolina in 1832 to nullify a federal tariff.

More recently, it has been used to resist the Real ID Act of 2005, a federal law pertaining to standards for the state driver's licenses and identification cards. The resistance to the Real ID Act began with Maine in early 2007. Altogether 25 states have passed resolutions and binding laws denouncing and refusing to implement the law due to concerns about privacy, funding and erosion of state authority. Our federal government has a long history of encroaching upon the authority of state governments by exceeding the specific enumerated powers in Article I of the Constitution. The Patient

Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 is a breathtaking example of such encroachment. The federal government has never been delegated the authority to comprehensively regulate health-care. Should Vermont nullify federally mandated healthcare?

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**When the Constitution was ratified, the sovereignty of states was presumed. Nullification is an expression of that sovereignty.**

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### Why nullify a federal law?

James Madison's quotation that begins this article expresses the reservations of the founders about delegating power to the federal government. It also expresses the belief that state governments would retain all governmental powers not expressly granted to the federal government. That principle was accorded constitutional status by the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution.<sup>1</sup> When the Constitution was ratified, the sovereignty of states was presumed. Nullification is an expression of that sovereignty.

### What is required to nullify a law?

To nullify a federal law our legislature must enact a law that expressly rejects the validity of the federal law in Vermont. Several states have already attempted this with respect to national healthcare. In Iowa, the 2010 session ended with the House minority leader conceding the failure of conservative efforts to nullify federal health care reform. In Arkansas, the 2010 session ended without action on a non-binding bill intended to "prevent involuntary enrollments in health care insurance programs." In Delaware, legislative leaders derailed a nullification effort by burying it in committee. In North Dakota, a proposed constitutional amendment failed in 2009. In Maryland and Michigan, attempts at nullification through constitutional amendments failed in committee. Model legislation has been drafted.<sup>2</sup>

To employ nullification within Vermont's borders, all we have to do is elect legislators and a governor who want to reclaim the power and authority usurped by the federal government. •

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Model Resolution for a State Legislature to Nullify the Federal Health Care Bills of 2010

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## Free Vermont Media: *Mixed Nuts*—Aren't We All? (Or, "In the name of Vermont we defy the world!") *James Hogue*

Though I say it, who shouldn't, *Mixed Nuts* looks to be a very entertaining production.

What is it? *Mixed Nuts* is a screwball musical comedy with 12 songs from the 1920s and '30s, and a cast of independence-minded eccentrics from the Vermont State Hospital who have prepared a vaudeville review directed by Dr. Elizabeth Darcy. They secede from the institution with hopes of bringing Vermonters along with them in seceding from the United States. The bizarre crew of entertainers is lead by a reincarnated, unpredictable, and loveable Ethan Allen. It will run in central Vermont at the Unadilla Theatre in East Calais, August 24-31, 2010. Showtime is 7:30 p.m.

Is *Mixed Nuts* about secession? It is, in the same way that *Pygmalion* is about linguistics. But this is what *Mixed Nuts* is really about: the courage and camaraderie of a few people, and how music and dance can move us. And *Pygmalion* is about the courage of Liza Doolittle going up against the brilliant, cold, and uncompromising Henry Higgins. Whether Higgins succeeds in pulling off his experiment of teaching Liza "to talk proper," or whether the inmates of *Mixed Nuts* succeed in their secession are both beside the point. Both these plays (and any play worth going to, for that matter) are about something more than their basic themes and plots.

I tell people who ask that *Mixed Nuts* is a screwball musical comedy about six inmates who escape from the custody of the Vermont State Hospital in order to make Vermont an independent republic. That is the kind of answer that one must give because people need to know the genre, the plot, and the motivation of the main characters before anything else.

The answer I want to give to that question is that *Mixed Nuts* is about dancing. But that is nothing to hang your hat on, and it would be doing the play a disservice because such an answer is so open to interpretation as to be meaningless. My elevator speech would end in failure, as you will see. But we, you and I, are not in an elevator. And I am now writing this so as to seduce you into believing that this play is worth doing because it is the stuff of dreams.

And what is dancing that it is worth your time? Is it learning a few steps and moving around a dance floor? Sure. Is it "a language to whisper private and sacred things . . . the expression of a search for a passion that might be spiritual or romantic or uncategorizable, but that, in any case, is an antidote to the harsh facts of an earthbound existence?" Sure.

The play opens with "Let Yourself Go," a dance and a song about dancing. The next song is also



The *Mixed Nuts* cast: From left, Mary Wheeler, Joe Lee, Jim Hogue, Aaron James, and Charlie Cerutti. SUPPLIED BY JIM HOGUE.

about dancing: "In me you see a sinner, and dancing is my crime . . ." The Green Mountain Boys get "Happy Feet" in their exhilaration. The play ends with a dance. So the play is about dancing.

It's also about camaraderie, courage, independence, conviction, reason, control, power, love, and the old horses: sanity versus insanity, reality versus superstition, and the blending of life and art.

But every character in the play is dancing. It is a dance from start to finish.

*continued on page 26*

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Free Vermont Media, continued from page 25

"As you listen to the band don't you get a bubble?  
As you listen to them play don't you get a glow?  
If you step out on the floor you'll forget your  
trouble.

If you go into your dance you'll forget your woe.  
So . . ." - Irving Berlin

And now, gentle reader, I will tell you from whence it came.

There are several authors and playwrights who provided inspiration and material for *Mixed Nuts*. I will list them, as accurately as I can, in the order of the magnitude of their contributions.

- 1) George S. Kaufman ("Animal Crackers" in particular)
- 2) William Shakespeare ("The Taming of the Shrew" in particular)
- 3) Ethan Allen ("A Narrative of Colonel Ethan Allen's Captivity" in particular)
- 4) John Gay ("The Beggars' Opera")
- 5) Jared Sparks ("The Life of Ethan Allen")
- 6) John Remington Graham ("A Constitutional History of Secession")
- 7) John Pell ("Ethan Allen")
- 8) John Greenleaf Whittier ("The Song of the Vermonters")
- 9) Daniel Defoe ("A General History of the Pyrates")

Despite the obvious parallel between Ethan Allen of *Mixed Nuts* and Ken Kesey's great character, McMurphy, there is not one line or

plot device or idea used from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* with the exception of the name "Ratched," which becomes "Ratchet" in *Mixed Nuts*. Kesey's book, play, and movie each provided an important inspiration and vague blueprint, as did *King of Hearts* and *Marat/Sade*.

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**Is *Mixed Nuts* about secession? It is, in the same way that *Pygmalion* is about linguistics. What *Mixed Nuts* is really about: courage, camaraderie of a few people, and how music and dance can move us.**

---

The correct title for *Marat/Sade* is *The Persecution and Assassination Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*. I mention this for a reason that will become known to you if you attend the play.

The play was initially inspired by the escape of Mary Ellen Gottlieb from the Vermont State Hospital in January of 2005. She described her adventures in a piece called "From Hell: Why and How I Left Vermont State Hospital." Her firsthand account set *Mixed Nuts* in motion, and I have been working on it, on and off, since then. It has had two readings from which I learned that

much more work was needed. Which leads me to the reason I have asked you all here: and that is to talk about the creation of a work of art, whether it be via research or through personal experience or invention.

*Mixed Nuts* was written using all three.

Oscar Wilde said that a play is poetry and confession.

So I guess this article is about "Life to Art - How do we get there from here?" You've all heard of works that take years to write. There is a very good and necessary reason for that: Gestation. Ideas, even those that one succeeds in constructing into a format, even those that work, take a long time to settle, and a longer time to build on. One needs, often, to take a long break from a work of art in any form and then to start up again. Sometimes the flaws become evident, and the new material is a major improvement.

*Mixed Nuts* began as a screen play called *Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys*. I thought it was wonderful. Few others did, and, in time I saw why. Not for the same reasons as my critics, but the important thing is that I moved on to turning it into a play. I've written 10 plays, been in more than 100, directed plenty, taught theatre history and acting, and so I ought to have a sense of what is good and what isn't.

So how does a play get produced? You can always produce it yourself, but this is called a vanity production, and even if the vehicle is a Ferrari it gets little respect.

Bill Blachly, of the Unadilla Theatre in East Calais, contacted me in December of '09 to tell

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me that he'd like to include it in the 2010 summer repertoire. You might say that this an "in-house" production, in as much as I have worked at Unadilla on and off for 25 years. I have been working since December to cast it, and as you read this I certainly hope that job is done.

As to the music: I have been asked if the music advances the plot, or if it is just part of the vaudeville show that the inmates (The Green Mountain Boys) put on. Yes, it advances the plot, and the songs were chosen for that purpose, and are great songs in their own right. The songwriters are household names from the most inventive, musical, and sophisticated period of American musical theater. Irving Berlin, George and Ira Gershwin, Rodgers and Hart, Vincent Youmans and Gus Kahn, Kalmar and Ruby, DeSylva, Henderson and Brown, etc. Our music director and stage musician, Doug Perkins, is considered by some music aficionados to be the best guitarist in Vermont.

To tell you the truth, I can't say anymore about this play without feeling self-conscious. I'll let the characters give you secessionists a run for your money.

**Scene VII**

**Bill:** *(He pours wine and passes it. They act their parts as 18th century gentlemen.)* That Karl reminds me of Brian Peachem. Remember him? . . . Building inspector as I recall. I haven't seen him since he ate the cat.

**Caleb:** Sad story about Brian, the cat isn't all he ate, and eventually he got food poisoning which

they thought was an ulcer which they operated on and the poor guy never came out of it. But it was not in vain that he suffered, as he is now among the cadavers at the University, and serving a better purpose than he ever did in life where feline and other culinary temptations were ever-present. And now, he is the temptation, if one happens to be a medical student, working late.

**Bill:** Or a worm. Oh well, we all have to go sometime – better to go doing what you love.

**Curt:** But we, on the other hand, are alive and well. And no man on earth has the opportunity that we were given tonight. We are free . . . in the mind, in a world that has gone mad. Hell, are we any crazier than anyone else?

**All:** No!

**Curt:** Are we any more dishonest than anyone else?

**All:** No!

**Caleb:** What we committed were affairs of honor against the shame and indifference of a cold, cruel world, provoked by insult, necessity and rage . . .

**John:** Aye!

**Ira:** Aye! Avast me hearties!

**Caleb:** And where is the injury in standing up for what is right?!

**All:** Aye!

**John:** *(The pirate)* And to know what is right and not do it is a shameful thing. Not in our line, lads. Where shall we find such another set of practical philosophers who to a man are about the fear of death?

**Ira:** Aye!

**John:** Sound men and true, of tried courage and indefatigable industry.

**Ira:** Aye!

**Caleb:** Who is there here that would not die for his friend?

**John:** Who is there here that would betray him for a price?

**Caleb:** Show me a gang of Senators that can say as much!

**All:** Aye!

**Curt:** We are for a just partition of the world, for every man has a right to enjoy life!

**Ira:** All for one and one for all.

**Bill:** We're the canaries in the coal mine – with no-one to follow.

**John:** Aye, Cowardice: take that! Lies: take that!

**All:** Aye!

**Curt:** Good luck to us! Fill the glasses!

*(They sing.)*

Fill every glass, for Wine inspires us  
And fires us with courage, love and joy.  
Women and Wine should life employ.  
Is there ought else on Earth desirable?

*(Chorus)*

Fill every glass . . .

Come York or come Hampshire – come traitors and knaves,

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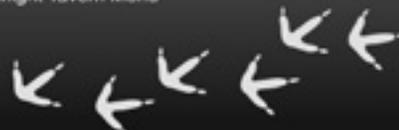
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# Green Mountain Music

## *Nocturnals Emission – Grace Potter’s Sexy New CD*

Rob Williams

If popular rock n’ roll music is about nothing else, it is about two things: sex and reinvention. Both are present in spades in Grace Potter and the Nocturnals’ new self-titled full-length feature recording.

First things first. Since they formed in Vermont’s Mad River Valley several years ago, GPN always has been a talented band, but they’ve upped the ante by adding two hot new musicians to their ensemble (after a falling-out with former bassist Bryan Dondero last year). Frontwoman/vocalist Grace Potter still holds court on the keyboard, guitar and vocals, Matthew “Cado” Burr (a.k.a. “Animal”) takes care of all things percussive, and Scott Tournet continues to do his magnificent six-string shredding thing on lead electric, complemented by bassist Catherine Popper (formerly with “Hem” and “Ryan Adams and the Cardinals”) and rhythm guitarist Benny Yurco (who plays with Tournet in GPN side project “Blues and Lasers”). With a busy national touring schedule, support from corporate label Hollywood Records, real stage panache, and hot shot producer Mark Batson (who has worked with Dr. Dre, Jay-Z, DMS, and Eminem in his day) at the helm, GPN is clearly a band on the edge of “making it” as a national musical phenomenon. Jeezum, a visit to their official web site’s merch page – [www.gracepotter.com](http://www.gracepotter.com) – indicates you can buy no fewer than seventeen different GPN T-Shirts. If

that ain’t “on the verge of success” status, what is? Grace herself, meanwhile, has transformed herself into quite the diva, complete with an ensemble of super-short skirts, high heels, and crazy hairdos. I can almost guarantee that I will not recognize her in the grocery store when she’s back in Mad River for a visit. Double Jeezum – Lake Champlain Chocolates just named a chocolate bar after her. A blend of pistachio flakes, spice, dark chocolate, and nuts – it’s called “Grace Under Fire.”

At the end of the day, though, it is all about the music. And, from my corner, the verdict on the music featured on the new GPN CD is, well, mixed. I’ve listened for three solid weeks now, and I’ll say the recording has grown on me. But I can’t help comparing the new collection of songs with GPN’s last two projects – “Nothing But The Water” and “This Is Somewhere.” Both were stand-out efforts, marked by incredibly smart songwriting, tight production, and spirited performances by all the band members, from the JJ Cale-inspired grooves of “Toothbrush and My Table” to the brilliant anti-imperial anthem “Ah Mary.” (And sadly, neither album is available on iTunes – pity). What’s happened sonically with the new GPN project feels much more packaged (or perhaps I should say, “repackaged”) for a much broader mainstream audience, and there are trade-offs. While the

listener gets a whole heap of raw energy, much of it hyper-sexualized, the listener loses some of the creative diversity that made GPN as a truly Vermont-rooted band so interesting to listen to – songs about love, loss, politics, friendship, and spiritual transcendence, all delivered with a sense that “place” mattered (which, of course, it does.)

Instead, what the new GPN album is about is sex, mostly. Begin with the cover photo of the band, featuring Grace sitting on a suitcase – all hair, mini-skirt, and legs – looking off into the distance while fumbling with the strap of her very high heel, with the rest of the band in the background. The opening sound is a grunt which leads into a breathless suspended chord/vocal opening for a tune called “Paris (Ooh La La)”, a song about sex that illustrates as good as any other on the record what we as listeners get and what we give up with this new GPN project. “Paris” has 2 verses. Here they are:

You got me down on the floor/So what’d you bring me down here for? (Verse 1 and repeat)

You got me up on your swing/So when you gonna shake that thing?

(Verse 2 and Repeat.)

*continued on page 31*

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*Free Vermont Media, continued from page 29*  
 The bridge is reasonably clever lyrically:

If I was a man I'd make my move  
 If I was a blade I'd shave you smooth  
 If I was a judge I'd break the law...

And the chorus:

And if I was from Paris (x2), I would say  
 Ooh la la la la la la.

Now, if you are reading this, and you haven't heard the song, it'll sound a little silly. But when you hear it, complete with Grace's growls and grunts and groans, Burr and Powers' thumping drum and low-end work, and Tournet's screaming guitar, the tune is completely captivating.

The same is true for track 3, "Medicine," which features more yowling and "bump and grind" guitar work from Tournet's corner, and the hookiest chorus on the record – "she's got the medicine that everybody wants." In fact, as I was listening to the CD with my kids in the car when we first got it, my 8-year-old son asked me out of the blue: "Why is Grace Potter yelling so much, Papa?" "She's excited, son," I replied, in a fatherly tone. "Making music and all."

Now don't get me wrong. I love sex as much as anyone else, and I really dig the raw energy of the new GPN project – if not for the tight production, it almost feels like a live recording, in some respects. Neat.

What I miss is the lyrical depth and thematic diversity of GPN's previous two CDs. Sure, Grace gives it a go on tunes like the radio-friendly "Tiny Light" (track #5) and "Colors" (track #6), where she lyrically cozies up to more political themes, only to shy away again. And some of the tunes on the recording simply feel like filler, among them "Oasis" (track #2), "Money" (track #8) and "Hot Summer Night" (track #12), which I swear sounds like an old Bay City Rollers number. The first half of the record is much stronger than the second half, aside from the hauntingly gorgeous "Things I Never Needed," the CD's final tune, which harkens back to a younger GPN and made me a bit nostalgic for their older material.



Summer in Vermont is Music Time! Above, Vermont's Grace Potter lets it fly. MIKE HAYES

To be clear: I am rooting for Grace Potter and the Nocturnals. If you are looking for radio-friendly high-energy hyper-sexualized pop, this is the album for you. My hope is that, with their next project, the band will find ways to re-connect with Grace's smart and savvy lyricizing about all the things that matter, even as the band continues to transform themselves into a high-energy live arena phenomenon that hooks us into dancing too close to our neighbors.

Oo la la, indeed. •

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The Second Vermont Republic presents...  
**A 21st Century Statement of Principles**

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- 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 structure. 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 statewide 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-2nd business-generated energy.
- Homestead Security.** ¶ We celebrate Vermont's small, clean, green, sustainable, socially responsible towns, farms, businesses, schools, and places of worship. We encourage the diversification of our 21st century Vermont's working landscape, and the creation of more 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.