Congressional oversight of that system are fatally compromised in favor of non-stop hand jobs for military contractors to the direct operational
Take it from un-credentialed Vermont house-wife: Even a cursory examination of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Program reveals the Pentagon ignoring its own bylaws and brushing aside its own stated values in pursuit of an unstated and inconsonant goal. The continuation of the F-35 program, a program that is unnecessary, egregiously underperforming, over budget and behind schedule but nonetheless replete with an embarrassing level of fawning Congressional support, is an obvious “tell” of institutional failure, where the singular interests of global corporations can no longer be served within the rule of law.

The Nunn-McCurdy Amendment, a measure adopted by Congress in 1982 to curtail cost growth in U.S. weapons-procurement programs, provides an excellent framework for revealing the disparity between the official mission of the F-35 and the actual cause being advanced. Both the DOD appropriation system and the Congressional oversight of that system are fatally compromised in favor of non-stop hand jobs for military contractors to the direct operational

Continued on page 5
Guest Editorial

Taking Stock of Vermont Independence

Where do we in Vermont stand now? I stand by the original home page of the first online Vermont Commons Journal, published in 2004, that the Vermont Constitution has been effectively REVOIKED by the federal government. Sovereignty has been taken away from Vermont in nearly every area that matters:

- Vermont has no independent ability to control our National Guard troops and keep them from the U.S.’ illegal and immoral wars, filled with war crimes and atrocities. This was assured by several recent Congressional rulings: the Montgomery Amendment, the Perpich case, and the John Warner Defense Act, taking all control away from state governors except in case of a state crisis.
- Vermont has no independent ability to control our money supply, which has been unconstitutionally privatized by the Federal Reserve and private banks.
- Vermont has no independent ability to control our National Guard troops and keep them from the U.S.’ illegal and immoral wars, filled with war crimes and atrocities. This was assured by several recent Congressional rulings: the Montgomery Amendment, the Perpich case, and the John Warner Defense Act, taking all control away from state governors except in case of a state crisis.
- Vermont has no independent ability to control our money supply, which has been unconstitutionally privatized by the Federal Reserve and private banks.
- Vermont has no independent ability to control the safety of hazardous industries such as the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant. The federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has jurisdiction over nuclear safety.
- Vermont has no independent ability to control our school system and must comply with federal unfunded mandates such as “No Child Left Behind” (Bush), and “Race to the Top” (Obama).
- Vermont has no jurisdiction over our sovereign wealth such as the “public airwaves,” that are controlled by the FCC, which has given away 98 percent of the frequencies for free to private for-profit corporate commercial interests.
- Vermont has no control over the expansion of federal debt to $14 trillion (100 percent of GDP), caused by the ruinous imperial wars that are driving the country broke, and provoking an increase in terrorism worldwide in response.
- Vermont has no independent ability to regulate campaign finance, as the U.S. Supreme Court ruled last year. The selling of our political system is the most fundamental cause of the loss of democracy in the U.S. of Empire. The recent “Citizen’s United” Supreme Court case assures that the federal government will remain a plutocracy. More than $4 billion was spent on the recent mid-term election, which is double any previous election. The Supreme Court’s closely related recognition of corporations as persons violates the state’s ability to charter and control the power and behavior of corporations. Corporations now truly rule the world.

The masses are in total denial of this reality. But that is to be expected. Denial is the first stage of death and change. Anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance are yet to come. The sheep meekly accept all the criminal acts of the federal government at home and abroad. That is also predictable. Jefferson stated, “…all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to continued on page 4

Vermont has no independent ability to regulate campaign finance. The “Citizen’s United” Supreme Court case assures that the federal government will remain a plutocracy.

Contributors

Gaelan Brown serves Vermont Commons: Voices of Independence, as its business manager and as a member of the editorial board. He blogs as “An Energy Optimist” at www.vtcommons.org.

Juliet Buck is an activist, wannabe homesteader, wife, and mother of two, who is making other plans while watching it all go to hell from South Burlington. She blogs under the moniker Radical SAHM.

Lauren-Glenn Davitian is an activist and organizer specializing in issues related to community-based media. She is executive director of CCTV Center for Media & Democracy, and lives in Burlington.

Carl Ettnier is director of Peak Oil Awareness in Montpelier. He hosts two radio shows and blogs on the subjects of Peak Oil and relocalizing.

Gary Flomenhoft was a founding participant and early editor of the publication that became Vermont Commons: Voices of Independence. He teaches energy technology and policy at the University of Vermont.

Richard Foley, of Brattleboro, is a professor at Keene State College in New Hampshire, where he has taught energy policy and technologies for the past 25 years. He serves on the editorial board of Vermont Commons: Voices of Independence.

The Greenneck loves heavy metal music, combustion motors, animals, and working the land. He lives in a self-built, solar-powered home in northern Vermont and may or may not be based on the life of Ben Hewitt, author of The Town That Food Saved and proprietor of benhewitt.net.

Michael Hayes is a freelance photographer and new media geek who resides in Burlington.

Bill Kauffman, the author of nine books, lives in his native upstate New York with his family.

Christopher Ketcham is an independent investigative journalist based in Brooklyn, New York. He has written for TIME, Orion, Counterpunch, and a host of other national publications.

Jasmine Lamb is a teacher and coach. She writes the blog, All is Listening: Loving Your Imperfect Life, at www.allislistening.com.

Will Lindner is a mandolin player, writer, and editor living in Barre. He serves as managing editor for Vermont Commons: Voices of Independence.

Robin McDermott is a co-founder of the Mad River Valley Localvore Project. She and her husband, Ray, operate their business, QualityTrainingPortal, from their home in Waitsfield, where they also grow much of their own food.

Kirkpatrick Sale, editor-at-large and author of a dozen books, including After Eden: The Evolution of Human Domination (Duke), is the director of the Middlebury Institute.

Rick Scharf teaches high school in Montpelier, and resides in Duxbury.

Taylor M. Silvestri, a student at Champlain College, attributes her failures to public schooling and her successes to every book she's ever read.

Jonathan Stevens is a Burlington-based attorney practicing law since 1980, whose work includes advising clients to represent themselves in addition to conventional law. See www.proselegalservices.com.

Carissa Stimpfel is a Professional Writing major at Champlain College, a native Vermonter, and the woman behind “Sex and the College Girl.”

Rob Williams, editor and publisher of Vermont Commons: Voices of Independence, is a teacher, historian, writer, musician and yak farmer living in the Mad River Valley.
The cover of the original issue of The Second Republic, published in July 2004 (the cover was glossy and full color). Six and a half years later, and going by the name Vermont Commons; Voices of Independence, we’re going strong, promoting the concept of an independent Vermont republic.

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

Letter to the Editor

BURNT WOOD FOR ELECTRICITY: FOREST USE OR FOREST ABUSE?

Editor, Vermont Commons:

Articles on wood heating in Vermont by Gaelan Brown (“A Wood-Fired Energy-Independence Plan For Vermont,” VC Stick Season 2010) and Carl Etnier (“Local Heat, Beyond the Wood Stove,” VC Stick Season) left out a crucial piece of information. Two 29.5-megawatt electricity-generating biomass facilities (with adjacent wood-pellet manufacturing) are currently proposed for Pownal and Fair Haven by out-of-state developer Beaver Wood Energy, LLC, which have the potential to restrict the wood supply available for heating applications in the state.

Vermont’s legislatively appointed Biomass Development Working Group’s 2011 interim report assumes that Vermont has only 600,000 to 750,000 green tons of wood reasonably available for expanded biomass burning (not including current heating and electricity, i.e. the 50-megawatt McNeil generating station in Burlington and the 20-megawatt Ryegate facility). Each of these proposed large-scale facilities would require 583,500 tons of wood. While it’s true that some of the wood would come from out of state – the injustice of impacting New York’s and Massachusetts’ forests for Vermont’s energy consumption aside – those in favor of expanding wood heating at the home or district level in the state should already be on the phone with their legislators.

In this issue

1 The Empire’s New Clothes: Obama, War, and the Moral Case for Vermont Independence Christopher Ketcham
2 Why Vermont Should Say NO to the F-35 Juliet Back
3 Editorial: Taking Stock of Vermont Independence Gary Flomenhoft
4 Letter to the Editor
5 Vermont Vox Populi: Interview with the Big Picture Theater’s Claudia Becker Rob Williams
6 The Vermont Council of Censors: An Idea Whose Time Has Returned Rick Scharf and Rick Foley
7 Bye Bye Miss American Empire: Introduction Part Deux Bill Kauffman
8 Secession Briefs: We’ll All Be Safer When You’re Naked Jonathan Stevens
9 Free Vermont Media: U. S. News Media Checking In at the ICU Taylor M. Silvestri
10 Transition Times: Putney Zips Toward Resilience Carl Etnier
11 Media In The Hands of the People: Alive and Well in Vermont’s 2010 Elections Lauren-Glenn Davitian
12 The Greenneck: This Is My Time (Winter Musings)
13 Energy Optimist: Wanted—A Holistic Perspective on Vermont Energy Gaelan Brown
14 Localvore Living: Books For Cooks Robin McDermott
15 Tips on Roasting Winter Vegetables from cookbook author Andrea Chesman
16 Sex’cession: Are You Turned Off? Carissa Stimpfel
17 Perhaps Collapse: The Hopelessness of Hoarding Jasmine Lamb
18 Dispersions: On John Randolph and “Secession—A Right Undeniable” Kirkpatrick Sale
19 Vermont Vox Populi: Interview with the F-35 Juliet Back
20 Introduction Part Deux Bill Kauffman
21 By Bye Miss American Empire: We’ll All Be Safer When You’re Naked Jonathan Stevens
22 Secession Briefs: We’ll All Be Safer When You’re Naked Jonathan Stevens
23 Free Vermont Media: U. S. News Media Checking In at the ICU Taylor M. Silvestri
24 Transition Times: Putney Zips Toward Resilience Carl Etnier
25 Media In The Hands of the People: Alive and Well in Vermont’s 2010 Elections Lauren-Glenn Davitian
26 The Greenneck: This Is My Time (Winter Musings)
27 Energy Optimist: Wanted—A Holistic Perspective on Vermont Energy Gaelan Brown
28 Localvore Living: Books For Cooks Robin McDermott
29 Tips on Roasting Winter Vegetables from cookbook author Andrea Chesman
30 Sex’cession: Are You Turned Off? Carissa Stimpfel
31 Perhaps Collapse: The Hopelessness of Hoarding Jasmine Lamb
32 Dispersions: On John Randolph and “Secession—A Right Undeniable” Kirkpatrick Sale

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.

Responsible, low-impact logging will undoubtedly continue to supply Vermonters with necessary forest products such as lumber and firewood; however I am confused by Gaelan Brown’s statement that New England’s naturally regenerating forests somehow need to be logged to make them healthy. We’re not talking about even-aged, single species, mathematically spaced monocrop tree plantations; we’re talking about natural forests that have been re-seeding themselves over the past century, just as they have seeded themselves following natural disturbances over the ages. Forests covered the North American continent for millennia before the first human being set foot on the land mass. I’m not exactly sure of the reasoning behind the assertion that forests somehow need us around to prosper.

continued on page 4
Guest Editorial, continued from page 2

suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right
themselves by abolishing the forms to which they
are accustomed.”

The only people rebelling are the misguided
Tea-baggers who think the government is too
“socialist,” when in reality it’s a corporate-state.
But at least they are rebelling!

The solution will not come from voting. It will
come from a tax revolt or from collapse.

Some say the collapse of the U.S. Empire will
be awful: mass confusion, starvation, violence,
anarchy, etc.

I disagree.

I think things are terrible now. According
to former CIA agent John Stockwell, the U.S.
Empire has murdered 6 million people directly,
and perhaps 20 million people since World War
II, mostly during the “Cold” War, but it hasn’t
slowed much since the demise of the Soviet
Union. The United States has 20 percent of its
children living in poverty, 40 million without
health care, a government-by-money totally
immune to reform, trillion-dollar deficits, an
escalating $14-trillion debt soon to be followed
by hyperinflation, two illegal wars of aggres-
sion and more to come, collateral damage of at
least 600,000 dead Iraqis and millions displaced,
illegal domestic wiretaps, assassination at will
by drones of even U.S. citizens, torture, rendi-
tion for torture, bailouts for the banksters, fore-
closure fraud, wealth inequality and greed on a
massive scale, a corporate pseudo-fascist state
with a corporate Supreme Court, and a corporate
Congress.

Need I go on?

The federal government as controlled by the
military/banking/chemical/industrial
complex is the source of most of our problems.

Vermont hasn’t caused any of these problems.
They are all federal. How could it be worse to free
ourselves of this monster, and liberate ourselves
from the liabilities we are subject to as vassals of
the empire?

I say Vermont can do better on its own. We can
talk about a federation of independent states later.

As Vermont Commons launches its first issue
of 2011, here’s to another six years of forward think-
ing and acting.

And beyond.

Gary Flomenhoft

A Reflection: As the second editor (briefly) of the
Journal of Vermont Independence, I have been
given the privilege of writing this Winter 2011 edito-
rial. David White put together the first (glossy print)
issue in July of 2004. I created issue #2 online during
fall 2004, the first issue entitled Vermont Commons.
Once it was online, Rob Williams (now Vermont
Commons’ publisher) ably took over as editor and
expanded it to print, and I became a contributing
writer.

Letter, continued from page 2

It’s true that the growth of individual trees can
be sped up through low-impact forest manage-
ment (not clearcutting or high grading), but that’s
an argument for commercial timber production,
not forest ecology. A forest ecosystem is in no
hurry to grow its trees, and actually consists of
much more than just trees, but also soils, water-
sheds, understory plants, fungi, fish, and wildlife.

Forests also provide us with clean air, pure drinking
water, flood and erosion control, regulation of regional climate and rainfall, and the storage
and sequestration of carbon. Perhaps our greatest
allies in the fight against climate change are our
living, growing forests.

I’d also like to address what is known as the
“methane myth,” that forests should somehow be “cleaned up” to keep decomposing wood
from polluting the atmosphere. Environmental
Working Group’s 2010 report, Carbon Loophole Threatens U.S. Forests, explains how “bacte-
rial methane production during decomposition occurs under low-oxygen conditions that occur
mostly in wetland soils, and not in the well-aerated conditions of uplands where most logging residues
are found” [my italics]. Dead wood is one of the
most important components of a healthy forest,
providing future soil nutrients and essential wild-
life habitat. Burning up these forest “residues”
for electricity is equivalent to robbing the soil’s
fertility.

No one is saying that Vermont’s forests can’t
provide us with many of life’s essentials. But
to achieve genuine “sustainability,” we’ve got
to be honest about our impact on the landbase.
If we need to log for lumber or firewood, that’s
fine, but let’s not pretend we’re doing the forest
any favors when we do so. Otherwise we run
the risk of following that reasoning to its logi-
cal conclusion — that if some logging is good,
more logging is even better. And it’s that kind of
thinking that jeopardizes the living life-support systems that make life on Earth possible: our
precious forests.

Josh Schlossberg

East Montpelier

For Vermont to become energy-independent, there needs to be a whole lot more of these (a prodigious stack of firewood beside a house in Orange County) and a better-developed system for providing such fuel to Vermonters of all means.

WILL LINDNER

Josh Schlossberg is a steering committee member for Transition Town Montpelier, communica-
tions coordinator for Biomass Accountability Project, and a forest commissioner for the Town of East Montpelier. He encourages readers to contact him at gryneman@gmail.com.)

Gaellan Brown’s response:

Thank you, Josh, for calling out these impor-
tant issues, especially the valid argument against expansion of wood-fired electricity in Vermont.

Regarding forest health, there are many ques-
tions, as you point out. But we must recognize the
context that it is feasible for Vermont to get all of
our thermal fuel by harvesting less than 1 percent
of our forest resource annually, without depleting
the size of the forest.

Carl Etnier’s response:

In Vermont, 60 percent of the buildings depend
on oil for heating. We’re at the end of a long,
fragile oil-supply chain, and oil is rapidly becom-
ing more scarce and expensive. In 2008, before
prices fell back, how many Vermonters were
faced with choices of heating their homes or
buying food?

I highlighted small-scale, wood-fired district
heating projects because they have the poten-
tial to use our wood resource most efficiently.
I agree with Schlossberg that a small number of
large-scale projects that burn wood solely
electricity could claim most of Vermont’s
sustainably harvestable forest biomass. Vermont
would be well served by a process that priori-
tizes uses of our forests, before there’s a big
spike in harvesting for new, long-term projects
like power stations. Increasing the number of
buildings heating with wood will make the state
more resilient and demonstrate the market for
that use of wood.
Empire’s New Clothes, continued from page 1

intelligence. I had met Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan and CNN viewers that he was not the man in the tapes. After 9/11, Secretary of State Colin Powell promised Americans the State Department would issue a White Paper detailing bin Laden’s guilt. Afghanistan’s Taliban government asked for this document before it would extradite bin Laden, as the U.S. was demanding. The White Paper was never produced, and the U.S. ignored proper legal procedure and invaded Afghanistan. We still wait for evidence.

What does all this have to do with Vermont secession?

It relates to the moral stand, if any, that secessionists might present as their banner against the monstrous machine of war that the United States has become. Not only does the “war on terror” (its chief predicate the thwarting of the bin Laden “threat”) continue its vampiric drain on national resources — hundreds of billions of tax dollars down the toilet to fund illegal wars and occupations that have arguably have made the U.S. less safe, the Middle East less stable. The cost in treasure and the loss to national security, however, should not overshadow the moral horror of the wars, which is tallied not in the bean-counting at the U.S. Treasury, but in the blood-soaked facts of murder committed in our name.

Tens of thousands of American soldiers have been wounded; thousands have been killed; hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and Afghans have died as a result of the interventions in their nations by the United States. No change is in sight, no new vision for the future is made substantive, though it was promised in the fanfare of 2008. Former Harper’s editor Roger Hodge observes in The Mendacity of Hope that the presidency of Barack Obama – to whom he refers, in deference to liberal opinion, as the “Archangel” – has accomplished the stunning feat of operating as a kind of Stalinist stooge term for George W. Bush, continuing as part of the vaunted “change” the most repugnant, illicit, and poisonous of the Bushite policies.


Hodge notes that Obama in 2009 ordered more Predator drone attacks, which have killed hundreds of Pakistani civilians, than Bush did in eight years as president. Obama ordered the first such “targeting killing” (as the nomenclature would have it) on his third day in office. The New America Foundation concluded in a study of U.S. drone attacks that the civilian casualty rate among Pakistanis “collaterally damaged” by Predators was as high as 32 percent. Hodge writes that Philip Alston, the United Nations special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions, warned the Obama Administration in October 2009 “that its assassination program was probably illegal under international law and that the administration’s refusal to justify the program was untenable.” Lawyers for the State Department assured that the program conforms with “all applicable laws,” offering no explanation for why this might be so – except that the good citizens must trust in the Archangel’s wisdom and judgment. “I did not see the State Department say anything that was different from the previous administration’s legal thinking,” concluded John Bellinger, a lawyer for the National Security Council under Bush.

Moral “collateral damage”

The immorality of the United States government, its total loss of ethical compass, has its necessary – and banally evil – effect on the soldiers in the field who are pursuing bin Laden’s ghost. For example, we already know enough from the infamous Wikileaks Afghan archives to conclude that the recent news of the so-called “Kill Team” in Afghanistan – 12 U.S. Army soldiers wantonly murdering and mutilating Afghan civilians – is no news at all. It is the norm of empire. It is the horrific quotid.ian.

The soldier who last September revealed the predations of the Kill Team, in a post to his parents on Facebook, writes of Afghanistan that “there are no good men left here. It eats away at my conscience every day.”

Would that it ate away at the conscience of his fellow Americans. The Team’s work, after all, is ours, paid for by us, abetted by our silence and our receivables, sanctioned by our standing up nowhere to be seen in opposition to a United States government that renders barbarism as statesmanship. The work, to be sure, consisted of that for which the Team was well-trained, their minds at ease for the labor, the Empire having asked of them only to oil their muscles and derange their hearts enough to put into action the deranged policy programmed by the higher-ups behind the laptops and in the lounge chairs. That all was murder and murder with a vengeance – what is right and what is wrong. The circuit had ruled that the Obama Administration shall be free to continue the torture of human beings under cover of law. The case, Binyam Mohamed vs. Jeppesen Datanlap, Inc. was brought by the ACLU on behalf of five victims of torture (the defendant, a subsidiary of Boeing, contracts to provide the critical flight planning and logistical support for the CIA’s “extraordinary renditions”). The victims, innocents all, attested that under the watch of the CIA and their other “extraordinary” handlers, they were beaten, their bones broken, their penises cut open, a “hot stinging liquid” poured into the open wounds, bodies pushed into their anuses, their arms shackled as they were hung from ceilings. At least one of them was placed for a month in a room with open sewage. Barack Obama, following the lead of his predecessor, saw nothing wrong here, no need for truth or reconciliation or, god forbid, an apology; instead intervening in the case to prevent whatever “state secrets” the Circuit had not seen, the circuit had not been told of. The Circuit held that for which the Team was well-trained, their minds at ease for the labor, the Empire having asked of them only to oil their muscles and derange their hearts enough to put into action the deranged policy programmed by the higher-ups behind the laptops and in the lounge chairs. That all was murder and murder with a vengeance – what is right and what is wrong.

The case, Binyam Mohamed vs. Jeppesen Datanlap, Inc. was brought by the ACLU on behalf of five victims of torture (the defendant, a subsidiary of Boeing, contracts to provide the critical flight planning and logistical support for the CIA’s “extraordinary renditions”). The victims, innocents all, attested that under the watch of the CIA and their other “extraordinary” handlers, they were beaten, their bones broken, their penises cut open, a “hot stinging liquid” poured into the open wounds, bodies pushed into their anuses, their arms shackled as they were hung from ceilings. At least one of them was placed for a month in a room with open sewage. Barack Obama, following the lead of his predecessor, saw nothing wrong here, no need for truth or reconciliation or, god forbid, an apology; instead intervening in the case to prevent whatever “state secrets” the Circuit had not seen, the circuit had not been told of. The Circuit held that for which the Team was well-trained, their minds at ease for the labor, the Empire having asked of them only to oil their muscles and derange their hearts enough to put into action the deranged policy programmed by the higher-ups behind the laptops and in the lounge chairs. That all was murder and murder with a vengeance – what is right and what is wrong. The Circuit had ruled that the Obama Administration shall be free to continue the torture of human beings under cover of law.

Moral “collateral damage”

The immorality of the United States government, its total loss of ethical compass, has its necessary – and banally evil – effect on the soldiers in the field who are pursuing bin Laden’s ghost. For example, we already know enough from the infamous Wikileaks Afghan archives to conclude that the recent news of the so-called “Kill Team” in Afghanistan – 12 U.S. Army soldiers wantonly murdering and mutilating Afghan civilians – is no news at all. It is the norm of empire. It is the horrific quotidian.

The soldier who last September revealed the predations of the Kill Team, in a post to his parents on Facebook, writes of Afghanistan that “there are no good men left here. It eats away at my conscience every day.”

Would that it ate away at the conscience of his fellow Americans. The Team’s work, after all, is ours, paid for by us, abetted by our silence and our receivables, sanctioned by our standing up nowhere to be seen in opposition to a United States government that renders barbarism as statesmanship. The work, to be sure, consisted of that for which the Team was well-trained, their minds at ease for the labor, the Empire having asked of them only to oil their muscles and derange their hearts enough to put into action the deranged policy programmed by the higher-ups behind the laptops and in the lounge chairs. That all was murder and murder with a vengeance – what is right and what is wrong.
Lost on Planet Pentagone, continued from page 1
detriment of the men and woman in the military
and at the ever-increasing burden of taxpayers.
Nunn-McCurdy requires, among other things, the
cancellation of any defense program whose
total cost grew by more than 25 percent over
the original estimate, unless the United States
Secretary of Defense submits a detailed explana-
tion certifying that the program is:

1. Essential to the national security because
there is no suitable alternative of lesser cost
available;
2. Affordable insofar as new estimates of total
program costs are reasonable;
3. Accountable insofar as the management
structure is adequate to control costs.

The F-35 program has violated Nunn-McCurdy
twice. In 2005, DOD was able to convince
Congress that although the program was really
big and really messed up, they could fix it. I imag-
in there was much rueful head shaking and some
pro forma chagrin before Congress re-certified the

Initially, the projected cost of the
F-35 was $35 million each; today the projected cost is $155
million each. On what planet can a
450-percent increase in price be
labeled “reasonable”?

program. In 2010, DOD argued that the program
was now HUGE and incredibly fucked up, but
they could fix it, and Congress re-certified. The
difference being that in 2010 it was impossible
for DOD to factually defend a single one of the
assurances they offered to prevent the program
from being cancelled on the spot as federal law
required.

First, the F-35 program is not essential to
national security because there are suitable
alternatives of lesser cost available. The DOD/
Congressional meme dictates that our opera-
tional capacity depends entirely on this program
so it is throw up your hands, the show must go
on, too big to fail.

This is unmitigated horseshit. With no mean-
meaningful flight testing to speak of, all F-35 capability
currently resides exclusively in PowerPoint and
a few DOD wet dreams, so not only are there
many viable alternatives but all the alternatives
are thoroughly proven and much less expensive.
A combination of the new F-16 fighter jet, the
mothballed A-10, the Gripen, the Eurofighter,
the Super Hornet, and Cruise missiles can cover
all the bases the F-35 promises to cover in some
far-off and misty technophilic's tomorrow. No one
can argue that this program is essential,
except insofar as cancelling it and being forced to
call a spade a $70 billion Lockheed Martin R+D
subsidy would be exceptionally embarrassing.

Second, new cost estimates are not reasonable.
Initially, the projected cost of the F-35 was $35
million each. Today the projected cost is $155
million each. On what planet can a 450-percent
increase in price (with serious performance
concessions, mind you) be labeled “reasonable”?
Only on Planet Pentagon, where they can’t
tell you who their contractors are, what their
contractors are doing, or if they’ve been paid
once, twice, or three times a lady? The Pentagon
has been given a hall pass in respect to the Chief
Financial Officers Act. This act requires audit
readiness from all federal agencies and depart-
ments. The Pentagon has failed to meet the stan-
dard for 27 years running. (Having read a good
many of their reports, I can posit that the use of
impenetrable acronyms could account for a good
deal of the confusion.) And before you reach for

In the absence of reality-based
justifications, the F-35 can be seen for
what it is: an effort to transfer wealth
from taxpayers to weapons contractors
by a military-Congressional conspiracy
of rank deceit cloaked in a deeply
cylnical patriotic fog.

the “it is the nature of groundbreaking techno-
logical advances to have unknown costs” ration-
alization, let’s be clear that the reason DOD
offered to explain the cost increases was that
the initial estimates didn’t include the costs of
machine tooling, construction materials or labor,
items reasonably within the purview of even the
dullest project manager.

The real reason the price has gone up so expo-
entially is that the DOD knew what the price
needed to be to sell the program and simply
cynically and illegally provided that price,
knowing full well that once it was in the pipe-
line and the money was flowing it would likely
never be cancelled. You know why they spread
defense contracts around to every state? So every
congressman will have the incentive to let these
monsters keep rolling no matter the ultimate cost.

The spiraling cost overruns will only be exacer-
bated in the near future as foreign buyers renege
on their purchase agreements due to increasing
price and extended production timelines. The

F-35 is engaged in an “acquisition death spiral”: As
fewer planes are built to spread costs across,
each plane becomes more expensive until it prices
itself out of the market entirely. Back in the day,
Pentagon propaganda ministers were pimp walking their epaulets around town saying they’d be building between 3,000 and 5,000 of these planes. Today the number stands at just 2,400, with Norway, Denmark, Canada, Japan, the UK, and Australia delaying their purchases and reducing their orders.

The only foreign buyer that isn’t balking at the F-35 purchase is Israel – and that’s because we are giving them a $30 billion military aid package to buy them with and Lockheed itself is giving them $4 billion in domestic manufacturing guarantees. Wait! You didn’t think American manufacturers were going to make all these planes, did you? Oy vey!

Third, management structure is not adequate to control costs. Just five months after Congress re-certified the F-35 program in 2010, the Pentagon turned around and de-certified Lockheed Martin’s aircraft cost-and-schedule-tracking system – i.e., their management structure for controlling costs. According to a Pentagon procurement director, the cost-and-schedule-tracking system had been significantly deficient for three years, so the Pentagon was fully aware that management structure was not adequate long before Ashton Carter (esteemed Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology & Logistics) stood in front of Congress with his pants afire and testified that it was. I wonder what DOD will do at the inevitable third violation hearing? Protest being forced to pay Lockheed in goats, the only remaining expensive retrofits or just be junked entirely and the Ministry of Truth and engage in a robust campaign of recidivist history and mass hallucination regarding U.S. military capability. The GAO is also voicing concern about the small issue of the F-35’s design/concurrency. In a bid to forestall the acquisition death spiral by actually meeting a production deadline, Lockheed Martin is building planes while still designing their major systems. This guarantees a first run of $155 million “mistake jets” which will require crazy-expensive retrofits or just be junked entirely and sent to the western desert to be used for target practice.

Additionally, the GAO is fretting the estimated $1 trillion total lifetime cost of the program, worrying it may prove unaffordable given the austerity storm looming on the U.S. budget horizon. Now seems like a good time to remind folks that the raison d’être of the F-35 program was greatly enhanced affordability relative to our current fleet. Current estimates (which will be revised substantially upwards in about five months, I figure) of the operation and support costs for the F-35 will be 1.5 times the cost of the aircraft it will replace. The most fundamental tenet of the program is lying in a savagely violated heap on the floor, but no one can acknowledge it any more than a baseball player can grab at the hurt place when he gets hit by a pitch.

In the absence of reality-based justifications, the F-35 can be seen for what it is, Bernie Sanders: an effort to transfer wealth from taxpayers to weapons contractors by a military-Congressional conspiracy of rank deceit cloaked in a deeply cynical patriotic fog. The desertion of the rule of law and fact-based decision-making renders any appeal through the democratic process both frustrating and ultimately useless. This elite game of pin the tail on the moving target is mirrored by many of our dominant institutions as they labor to sustain their legitimacy and their power. Like bank stress tests, healthcare reform and airport security, this is stagecraft aimed at upholding the illusion for as long as possible while the mechanisms of disaster capitalism bleed the public dry.

In the Palin Era, there will be no fact-based reckoning allowed or, let’s get real, even suggested. But if our governing elites were to allow such a reckoning on the F-35 or any of the other shit-end-of-the-Ponzi-scheme boondoggles that are in play, a terrifying truth would be revealed: Oligarchic capitalism and the debt economy, escorted by the four horsemen of peak oil, the murder of American manufacturing, the financialization of the economy, and the immaturity, nescience and apathy of the American people, have popped their last bottle of bubbly. Despite the U.S. Empire’s grotesque efforts to resuscitate it, the centralized democratic infinite-growth paradigm is dead and the new boss in town is unelected. It is the Pentagon, securely tethered on Lockheed Martin and Co.’s short leash and accountable to none other.
Vermont Vox Populi: Getting the Big Picture—An Interview with Entrepreneur Claudia Becker  Rob Williams

The list of films, events, and the schedule of the Big Picture Theater’s MountainTop Film Festival can be found at www.mountaintopfilmfestival.com.

So what’s a talented German frau like you doing in Vermont running a theater/cafe/performance space called “The Big Picture”?

Claudia Becker: Laughter. Das Fraulein in Vermont: That’s me! I came to the [Mad River] Valley in 1996 when I literally stumbled over the Vermont Icelandic Horse farm due to a wrong turn. I went for a ride on the Icelandic horses (which I owned two of in Germany where I was still living at the time) and was offered a job by the owners of the farm, the Winholds. I took them up on their offer, leaving my fulltime job as a special ed teacher in Munich to shovel horse manure and guide rides for minimum wage instead. I fell in love with the Valley and its people, and by working here from day one I became quickly part of this great community. I still continued teaching after I moved to the U.S., and being married to a filmmaker at the time I started to use film in the classroom. And maybe even a sneak preview. I love French, German, and Italian films. I love all films that are not just telling stories with an enormous amount of art and elegance. I am a huge fan!

Where did you develop your interest in film?

Claudia Becker with filmmaker Eugene Jarecki the day they purchased the Big Picture Theater. PHOTO PROVIDED BY CLAUDIA BECKER

CB: My fascination with film and filmmaking started at the highest levels. I went to many film festivals, retrospectives, and in general there was such a vibrant and edgy cultural scene that challenged and educated my mind.

Eugene Jarecki’s film Waiting for Superman seems to be a breeding ground for the idea of greater self-sustainability, and the importance of keeping things “local.”

However, meeting the bottom line in such a small community while having a huge overhead has been a tremendous challenge, and there were many moments when I almost lost faith. I have often questioned my ability to be a tough enough “business person.” I know I am a great organizer and a great idealist, but turning that into a profitable reality for the Big Picture seemed like a challenge that I was not cut out for. Over the years I have developed a greater sense of what it takes to survive, and I think we can now see the silver lining on the horizon. For the first time in almost five years it feels like all the hard work and tireless effort to make this place better and more successful has paid off— all that karma is starting to come back to us. We will see!

Fingers crossed. Do you have a favorite film or director?

CB: I love anything from Breakfast at Tiffany’s to Slumdog Millionaire. I love French, German, and Italian films. I love all films that are not just stating the obvious, that challenge, that show the rougher edges of life. And having watched Eugene make his films, I think he is exceptionally talented at telling important political and historical stories with an enormous amount of art and elegance. I am a huge fan!

Tell us about the MountainTop Film Festival in 2004.

CB: This will be the 8th Annual MountainTop Film Festival, coming up January 12-16, 2011. The festival showcases films of social and political relevance, addressing human and civil-rights issues from around the world. This year the festival will focus on civic action taken around the world—from communities standing up to corporations that destroy their environment, to families overcoming political division in Palestine and Israel, to a soldier’s family questioning authority at the highest levels.

The festival aims to provoke critical thinking, start conversation, and encourage action. As always, we will invite filmmakers, thinkers, and the community to discuss the issues at hand, and with the receptions, the Q&A’s, and the live music that frame the festival it should be a great year again! We also offer free high school screenings and encourage teachers and students to take advantage of this great opportunity!

What films most excite you in the festival this year?

CB: The program is still a work in progress and needs to be confirmed in the next few weeks. But we are hoping to have the filmmakers for The Tillman Story, Waiting for Superman, Mountaintop Removal, and maybe even a sneak preview of Eugene Jarecki’s new film about the “War on Drugs.” Having the filmmakers here to talk with audiences is always the most exciting part, I think! I am also very excited to have a film about a Palestinian leader who unites Fatah, Hamas, and Israelis in an unarmed movement to save his village from destruction. Oliver Stone’s South of the Border will be part of the festival, along with a film called

This year the festival will focus on civic action taken around the world—from communities standing up to corporations that destroy their environment, to families overcoming political division in Palestine and Israel, to a soldier’s family questioning authority at the highest levels.

Vermont is the spearhead of movements aimed at greater self-sustainability, and the state’s lack of corporate development has become an advantage.

performance space, and most importantly a hub for the community where everybody is able to express themselves, meet, and share meaningful experiences.

And Mad River Valley is fortunate to have you here. Can you speak to the challenges and rewards of running your own business in Vermont during such interesting economic times?

CB: Running a small business in the era of eye, ear, and mind. When I moved to the U.S. I started to get very involved with Eugene Jarecki’s films and had the opportunity to learn about film making, go to festivals, meet other filmmakers. As a teacher I liked to use film in the classroom, and that combined interest in film and education lead to the inception of the MountainTop Film Festival in 2004.

Tell our readers about the MountainTop Film Festival coming up for Martin Luther King’s birthday.

CB: This will be the 8th Annual MountainTop Film Festival, coming up January 12-16, 2011. The festival showcases films of social and political relevance, addressing human and civil-rights issues from around the world. This year the festival will focus on civic action taken around the world—from communities standing up to corporations that destroy their environment, to families overcoming political division in Palestine and Israel, to a soldier’s family questioning authority at the highest levels.

The festival aims to provoke critical thinking, start conversation, and encourage action. As always, we will invite filmmakers, thinkers, and the community to discuss the issues at hand, and with the receptions, the Q&A’s, and the live music that frame the festival it should be a great year again! We also offer free high school screenings and encourage teachers and students to take advantage of this great opportunity!

What films most excite you in the festival this year?

CB: The program is still a work in progress and needs to be confirmed in the next few weeks. But we are hoping to have the filmmakers for The Tillman Story, Waiting for Superman, Mountaintop Removal, and maybe even a sneak preview of Eugene Jarecki’s new film about the “War on Drugs.” Having the filmmakers here to talk with audiences is always the most exciting part, I think! I am also very excited to have a film about a Palestinian leader who unites Fatah, Hamas, and Israelis in an unarmed movement to save his village from destruction. Oliver Stone’s South of the Border will be part of the festival, along with a film called...
Claudia Becker (left) and Jillian Abraham getting their hands dirty planting at Little Hands Farm in Mad River Valley. PHOTO PROVIDED BY CLAUDIA BECKER

Climate for Change, and Cover Girl Culture – a film that examines how advertising and the cult of celebrity have deeply impacted teens and young women.

So you can see there is a range of subject areas here, most of them with a focus on change and resistance.

And, from a business perspective, the Mad River Valley Rotary nominated you as businessperson of the year a few years ago. Tell us more about that.

CB: That was a great surprise, especially since I would never describe myself as a businessperson. I was extremely honored and I can’t stress enough how supportive the Rotary Club has been in so many ways! I work closely with members of the Rotary and many of them have become allies, friends, and regulars of the Big Picture Theater. The latest incarnation of that relationship is the Tuesday Night at the Movies Film Club that some members of the Big Picture Theater have called into life – a huge success and yet another great community institution!

Nice. You recently started your own farm a few miles down the road from the Big Picture. What’s that all about?

CB: Yes! The Big Picture has a little sister: Small Step Farm – a vegetable farm located on our land by the Mad River. It provides the Big Picture and other area restaurants with amazing and obviously extremely fresh produce. We have been getting most of our greens, herbs, onions, potatoes, tomatoes, squash, root vegetables, beans, and some specialty items such as artichokes and micro greens from the farm throughout the season. It is a wonderful addition to our effort to get our food locally. All of Big Picture’s meat, dairy, eggs, cheese, and bread comes from area farms, and as much as of our produce as seasonally possible. It makes such a big difference in freshness, quality, and spirit! I think people are really excited to see so much local production in this Valley and are proud of being so self-sustained. I know we are!

My daughter has expressed a desire to work at the theater as she gets older, and I can think of nothing better than the idea of having this be a true family business!

Hopefully in five years we will be financially stable and yet still inspired! Fear keeps you on your toes.

The Big Picture is a Mad River Valley hangout for lots of Vermont secessionist types. How do you feel about the idea of Vermont independence?

CB: I think it reflects the strong independent spirit of Vermonters and it is a wonderfully provocative idea! Vermont is the spearhead of movements aimed at greater self-sustainability and the state’s lack of corporate development has become an advantage. It allows people to think outside the box, to “do their own thing.” The combination of old and new values is what is so special in Vermont; a strong sense of independence and community combined with progressive approaches places this state out of the ordinary American landscape. I think in so many ways Vermont is already independent.

Where do you see the “Big Picture” in five years?

CB: If you had asked me that six months ago I would have hesitated to answer. Now I feel that we do have a future and that we will continue to grow and get better and more sustainable as a business. We are doing more and more events – from live music to film festivals to community gatherings – which is great and helps us generate more consistent traffic. There are still areas I would like to grow and expand, educational outreach being one of them. We are currently working on establishing relationships with schools to offer a range of film screenings and lesson materials that go along with them. We would also like to be able to host more daytime community programs, and at some point I need to expand the kitchen or else my chef will quit.

What do you see in store for the United States down the road?

CB: I think this is an empire that is at the very end of its power cycle. Unless this country recognizes how unsustainable its current MO is – both internally and globally – and until we see real change, I don’t think it will recover to either its original values and intentions or its economic and political strength. The change would have to come from the bottom up and I am not sure which direction that would go. Everything has become so polarized, and given how the global situation is so dire environmentally, politically, and economically, my hopes for big change are pretty small. I put all my hopes into the more immediate changes I see in the small orbit of my community. Beyond that I have lost most of my faith. Sorry to say.

What is your fondest hope for Vermont?

CB: I would love to see Vermont become more and more independent of the economic, environmental and political realities that dominate the rest of the U.S. landscape. I wish there were more people like Bernie Sanders who stand up to power and seem to really, truly care about justice and people and the environment. I would love to see more and more a shift to local independence and self-sustainability, be it in regard to governance, production, energy or social programs.

I hope Vermont can become the spearhead for a movement away from corporate control of our land, our work, our culture, our food, our health, our future.
Ten of us sat around a table at Goddard College in May of 2009, surrounded by chart paper upon which we had written our ideas for Vermont’s future governing structures. We were Dreaming Vermont’s Destiny (coincidentally, the title of the retreat that brought us together), recognizing that some of the present laws that govern Vermont were not in keeping with the high ideals of the Vermont Constitution. It was Gary Flomenhoft who remembered the now-abolished section of the original Vermont Constitution of 1777, Section 43, which called for the creation of a Council of Censors, whose duties it would be to determine, “whether the legislative and executive branches of government have performed their duty as guardians of the people; or assumed to themselves, or exercised, other or greater powers, than they are entitled to by the constitution. They are also to enquire whether the public taxes have been justly laid and collected, in all parts of this Commonwealth, in what manner the public monies have been disposed of, and whether the laws have been duly executed.” In 1786, the Council gained the additional mandate “to enquire whether the constitution has been preserved inviolate, in every part.”

They were to be convened every seven years for a period of one year. In order to accomplish its functions, the Council was given certain powers: “to send for persons, papers and records; they shall have authority to pass public censures, to order impeachments, and to recommend to the legislature the repealing such laws as appear to them to have been enacted contrary to the principles of the constitution.” Further, the Council had the power to call a Convention that would “meet within two years after their sitting, if there appears to them an absolute necessity of amending any article of this constitution which may be defective, explaining such as may be thought not clearly expressed, and of adding such as are necessary for the preservation of the rights and happiness of the people…”

We lamented the fact that the Council was abolished in 1870, and thus the Council’s work had gone undone for 140 years. With a little quick math, we realized that were the Council of Censors to have continued, the 13 members of the 33rd septenary would be due to convene in 2009, “on the first Wednesday of June.” We decided that the Council of Censors had much to do and that we would reconstitute that body to do the necessary work. Rather than being “elected by statewide election” as were the original Censors, we would be “self-selected.” A core group formed that day with plans to recruit others to round out the body to 13 members.

With members across the state having families and busy schedules, we took advantage of modern technology to convene as called for on June 4th via e-mail. A slate of questions was drawn up to decide how we would operate. We elected Rick Scharf of Duxbury to be the chair. We decided that we would seek consensus but would rely on majority vote (two-thirds majority if calling a Convention) as did the first 13 Councils. We voted
to include only current Vermont residents as Censors, and that in addition to transgressions of Vermont's Constitution by the state's legislative and executive branches we would also be investigating transgressions by the federal government. Finally, we decided to add the word “provisional” to our name, to be clear that we are not statewide-elected as were past Councils.

Section 43 of the 1777 Vermont Constitution called for the creation of a Council of Censors, whose duties would be to determine “whether the legislative and executive branches of government have performed their duty as guardians of the people; or assumed to themselves, or exercised, other or greater powers, than they are entitled to by the constitution.”

And with that, the 14th Provisional Council of Censors was born. Our first face-to-face meeting took place on October 3rd in Montpelier with seven Censors attending. At this meeting it was decided that, like past Councils, we would present a written Address – possibly to be issued incrementally. While the Council of Censors has traditionally had much to say to the Legislature (and it was clear that the Legislature was listening), they directed their Address “To the Freemen of the State of Vermont.” We wished to operate in the public eye and maintain minutes of our meetings. We endeavored to create a repeatable process which could guide a 15th Council of Censors. Due to the fact that we would be doing 140 years worth of work, we relieved ourselves of the one-year time limit that past Councils operated under, and recognized that it would likely take us a bit longer to accomplish our tasks to our satisfaction. A list of possible Constitutional violations was compiled and we moved forward, researching the issues based on the interest and expertise of the individual Censors. Issues currently under investigation:

- federal deployment of Vermont’s National Guard troops;
- corporate personhood;
- State tax collection and use of public monies;
- the relationship between state and local authority;
- participatory democracy
- the relationship between federal and state authority, specifically with regard to education and nuclear power;
- enclosure of the commons;
- Vermont’s Constitutional-amendment process;
- the keeping of standing armies.

We acknowledge that there are more potential Constitutional violations than we have the time and energy to investigate, and we welcome the involvement of others willing to assist us. Membership in the Council has fluctuated as Censors have needed to step down due to other commitments or have moved out of state. Others have heard our call and stepped up to join us. As of this writing, we currently have 10 members. They are: William Brueckner (Waterbury Center), Rick Foley (Brattleboro), Gary Flomenholt (Burlington), Gus Jaccaci (Thetford), Peter Moss (Fairfax), Susan Ohanian (Charlotte), Lynn Rosenblum (Thetford), Rick Scharf (Duxbury), Abigail Winters (Randolph Center), and Robert Wagner (Ripton). We hope to add at least three members to bring us to the Constitutionally prescribed 13.

We expect to be forthcoming with the first portion of our Address in time for the next issue of Vermont Commons. In the meantime, keep abreast of our activities via our website, www.VermontCouncilofCensors.org If you have questions and comments or would like to become involved with our work, contact Rick Scharf at rscharf@pshift.net. •
Bye Bye Miss American Empire

Introduction, Part Deux

Bill Kauffman

In our Stick Season (November 2010) issue of Vermont Commons, Voices of Independence, we published the first part of Bill Kauffman’s introduction to his recent book, Bye Bye Miss American Empire (Chelsea Green, 2010). Here, we present more of the introduction, and in coming issues, with the author’s permission, we plan to publish further Vermont-focused excerpts from the book.

“Secession,” says Rob Williams – historian, Vermont Commons publisher, and professor of media and communication at Champlain College – “is every American’s birthright.” It’s been almost a century and a half since any significant number of Americans believed that, but in November 2006 Williams’ cranny of New England hosted the first-ever nationwide conference of those who wish to make the nation a little less wide.

Yeah, sure, I know: Breaking away is impossible. Quixotic. Hopeless. So was dancing on the Berlin Wall.

The historic Vermont gathering was convened by Kirkpatrick Sale, founder in 2003 of the Middlebury Institute, a secessionist clearinghouse whose “ultimate task” is “the peaceful dissolution of the American empire.” The 2004 Middlebury Declaration, drawn up by Sale at the first conference his outfit hosted, committed itself to the promotion of “all the forms by which small political bodies, dedicated to the precept of human scale, distance themselves from larger ones, as in decentralization, dissolution, disunion, division, devolution, or secession, creating small and independent bodies that rule themselves.”

Sale is the author of the decentralist compendium Human Scale (1980) and books on the Luddites and Students for a Democratic Society. So that agents of the Department of Homeland Security won’t have to pore over his works, he offers this description of his political vision: “I am an anarchist who wants to see society organized on a small, human scale, based on self-determining communities.”

Sale scheduled the confab for just three days before the 2006 election, not for any symbolic reason but because it was “the first cheap weekend after the fall foliage season.”

So upon Burlington converged the divergent. Forty-three delegates from 18 states met around a long table in the Lake Champlain Salon of the Wyndham Burlington. I saw ponytails and suits, turtlenecks and sneakers, an Alaskan gold miner and one delegate from the neo-Confederate League of the South who wore a gray greatcoat, as if sitting for a daguerreotype just before the battle. When Sale called the gathering to order at 9 a.m., more or less sharp, the delegates did not begin the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Puerto Rican Independence Party sent supportive greetings but no delegates, though the Puerto Ricans – like the Hawaiians – denied that they need to secede from anything. Rather, they consider themselves an occupied country. Hell, they are an occupied country. Despite his best efforts, Sale was unable to attract Mexican-American delegates from the Southwest or representatives of the original conquered people, American Indians. These absences were sorely felt.

The location might seem, at first, thuddingly inappropriate. Why hold a secession conference in New England, cradle of unionism, bête noire of the Confederacy, source of the “Battle Hymn of the [indivisible!] Republic”? Yet no region of the country has been as fertile a ground for secessionist thought as New England.

Yankees threatened to leave the Union in 1803 when, with his constitutionally dubious Louisiana Purchase, Thomas Jefferson doubled the American realm, and the cries of separation once again rang through the Northeast in 1814, when New Englanders, appalled by the War of 1812, met at the Hartford Convention to discuss going their own way.

The subject of an amicable divorce was raised in the 1840s, during the debates over the annexation of Texas and the Mexican War. In each instance, New England had a strong moral case for secession. A practical one, too: “The country had gotten too damn big to govern from a swamp on the Potomac. The godlike (on his good days) Daniel Webster argued in 1846 that ‘there must be some limit to the extent of our territory, if we are to make our institutions permanent. The Government is very likely to be endangered . . . by a further enlargement of its already vast territorial surface.”

By the 1850s New England, with its courageous defiance of the Fugitive Slave Act, had become the epicenter of states’ rights—the logical end of which is secession—and of localist defiance of tyrannical central government. Yet a century later racist governors poached the phrase, but why should the fact that some Southern politicians used “states’ rights” to justify segregation in the 1950s forever discredit the philosophy of Jefferson and Patrick Henry? I mean, look: Neoconservative chickenhawks use the word freedom as often as Richard Pryor used to say “fuck.” Does that mean we ought to junk freedom? Or should we reclaim it?

My sympathy for the secessionists bleeds all over the page. I am native to and still a citizen of rural western New York, which is about as close as one can find to a powerless colony. And yet it is a sign of our debilitation that the most robust calls
for two New Yorkers have come from Gothamites (William Randolph Hearst, Norman Mailer, Bella Abzug). Still, a state of West New York would be a new star on Old Glory. So would the felicitously named State of Jefferson (marrying far Northern California to Southern Oregon) or the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The secessionists assembled in Burlington want, for the most part, out of the union altogether. They wish to be lone stars. Or if that sounds too grand – for a star, up close, is burning and blind and unfit to love – maybe we should just say that they want to be, like demoted demotic Pluto, “dwarf planets” whom the giants disdain to notice. Or attack.

For men (only two women delegates were present) who want no part of union, the Burlington delegates were awfully solicitous. Intersectional amity was the order of the day – rather as though a roomful of wives were seeking divorce from the same polygamous spouse, and whatever differences they might have among themselves paled before their agreement that Big Daddy is a real louse. “This isn’t right or left,” said one New Hampshirite, setting a theme for the conference. Peaceful hippies, whimsically radical Vermonters, and anti-corporate leftists broke bread with Southern Christians and men wearing Confederate flag lapel pins, and the skies did not darken nor the earth crack. In fact, the most striking feature of the conference was that if an auditor closed his eyes and could block out the accents, it was hard to tell who was the “leftist” and who was the archconservative.

The 2004 Middlebury Declaration committed itself to the promotion of “all the forms by which small political bodies, dedicated to the precept of human scale, distance themselves from larger ones, as in decentralization, dissolution, disunion, division, devolution, or secession, creating small and independent bodies that rule themselves.”

I heard mentioned, as heroes, Saul Alinsky, Robert E. Lee, strategist of nonviolence Gene Sharp, Thomas Jefferson, and Martin Luther King Jr. Denunciations were made of corporate greed, federal empire, television, the Iraq War, and the PATRIOT Act.

Were there fruits and nuts? Sure, a few. But just as cranks keep this country turning, so, too, are fruits and nuts a rapid alternative to Wonder Bread. The furry, troll-like man who proclaims himself King of Kansas is imaginative and harmless; the shaven men in tailored suits who call themselves president of the United States have been, of late, unimaginative and grossly harmful. I’ll take the King of Kansas, thank you very much.

If some secessionists are woolgathering gnomes, the best of them are patriots in the truest sense: They cherish the music, literature, accents, agriculture, history, and quirks of their places.

...continued on page 14
American springs: the participatory democracy dreams of the New Left, the small-is-beautiful ethos of the greens, the traditional conservative suspicion (nearly rubbed out by the Bush eraser) of big government and remote bureaucracy, and that old-fashioned American blend of don’t-tread-on-me libertarianism with I’ll-give-you-the-shirt-off-my-back communalism.

The Vermont Commons contributors ask and sometimes even answer the hard questions about secession: How would a local currency work? How do we revive town-meeting democracy? How does Vermont achieve a sustainable food system? How does it encourage community-supported agriculture, organic farms, co-ops, roadside markets, and backyard gardening? What would an independent Vermont energy policy look like? How feasible is local clothing production? With whom would Vermont trade?

“The left–right thing has got to go,” declares Ian Baldwin, co-founder of Chelsea Green Publishing and publisher emeritus of Vermont Commons. “We’re decentralists and we are up against a monster.”

What might replace left and right, liberal and conservative, as useful political bipolarities? Globalist and localist, perhaps, or placeless versus placeist. Owing to economic exigencies, Baldwin expects that the “world economy will relocalize.” Dismissing homeland security as “fatherland security,” Baldwin says we need “homestead security”: sustainable agriculture, small shops, a revival of craftsmanship, local citizenship, communal spirit. The vision is one of self-government. Independence from the empire but interdependence at the grassroots. Neighborliness. The other American Dream.

Bye Bye Miss American Empire, continued from page 13 to “create a visual iconography of Vermont secession” as a means of making secession “sexy – an attractive, interesting, viable political option.”

Vermont Commons is a gem: a literate, polemical, thought-provoking, radical newspaper that has featured contributions from the likes of Wendell Berry, Bill McKibben, James Howard Kunstler, former Burlington mayor Peter Clavelle, and a cast of politically uncategorizable Vermonters. For the stream of secession is fed by many secessionists are fond of the Soviet example. If, in 1985, you had stood on a platform and predicted that within a lustrum the Soviet Union would be all but dissolved, the snickers would have filled a candy factory. Kirk Sale also likes to point out that the United Nations, founded with 51 members in 1945, now has 192. Why not 193? A Newsweek poll in 1995 found that only 41 percent of blacks, 61 percent of whites, and 54 percent of Hispanics believed that a century hence the United States would “still exist as one nation.” It doesn’t take try the Disunited States of America? (Livingston belongs to the Second Vermont Republic but not to the League of the South. More on that anon.)

Critics of secession wonder if devolving power might not empower local tyrannies. For instance, the Vermonters have taken flak for cooperating with the League of the South, which is either a Southern cultural organization with an official commitment to equality before the law or an unsavory group nostalgic for the Confederacy, depending upon whom you believe.

Yet the range and potential of oppressive government has natural limits in a small jurisdiction. If a town in Alabama – or an upscale precinct in Manhattan – falls under the sway of knives or crooks, abused minorities can remonstrate, face-to-face, with the authorities. They can organize resistance on a human scale. Or, if all else fails, they can leave. Even at the state level, redress is not impossible.

Subjects of a large empire have no such option (other than expatriating). And unlike the Alabama town or Manhattan block, the U.S. government can wage wars, fill prisons, and curtail liberties on a scale undreamed of by petty tyrants. I suppose it comes down to this: Do you trust your neighbors, or do you trust Barack Obama and Newt Gingrich?

The Kentucky essayist Katherine Dalton, writing on the decentralist Web site Front Porch Republic, responds to the charge that local control leaves the door open to local oppression in this way: First, “that there are many examples of centralized injustice and we will live to see more, and, second, that we are going to have to tolerate local mistakes and injustices, at least in communities that are not ours (we canoller like anything at home), if we are going to trust people to govern themselves rather than be ruled from afar. Will children ever grow up if not given the leeway to fail?”

Amen, Sister Kate, amen.


“Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society.”

Mark Twain

I was listening to my car radio and happened to tune in to Rush Limbaugh delivering a rant about the new intrusive TSA scanners at our airports. Rush declared that the new scanning technology is part of a plot to desensitize us to increasingly intrusive personal scrutiny by our government. I found myself nodding in agreement.

In case you are unaware of what it is that is objectionable about the new scans, the scanner produces an image of the subject person completely naked. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was created in the wake of 9/11 to strengthen the security of the nation’s transportation systems while ensuring the freedom of movement for people and commerce. Within a year, TSA assumed responsibility for security at the nation’s airports and deployed a federal workforce to meet Congressional deadlines for screening all commercial airline passengers and baggage. In March 2003, TSA transferred from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Homeland Security. Today, approximately 48,000 Transportation Security officers serve on TSA’s frontline in 457 U.S. airports. They use their training and experience to screen approximately 2 million people a day. Bureaucrats are now able to view a nude picture of anyone they choose. Subjects are randomly selected. No one is exempt. Anyone can be subject to the scan: your husband, your daughter, your grandmother, your neighbor, and you. You are allowed the option of not being scanned, but in lieu of the scan you are subject to a very probing physical search of your body. But, don’t worry, they’ll wear gloves. And, you’ll be safer with their fingers in your groin.

We have a law limiting the government’s authority to search us. It’s called the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated; and no Warrants shall issue but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Notwithstanding its clarity, the Fourth Amendment’s protections against “unreasonable searches and seizures” have in fact been drastically weakened since they became the law of the land in 1791. As it stands today, unless there exists a “reasonable” expectation of privacy neither local police nor federal law enforcement authorities are required to get a warrant or other court order before they start a surveillance operation. Requiring us to submit ourselves bare naked, without probable cause, for leisurely inspection by government apparently is now a reasonable search.

How has the government managed to circumvent the Fourth Amendment with impunity? Largely through the gradual erosion of court decisions, the Fourth Amendment has been neutralized. In 2007, the United States Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed that warrantless airport searches are reasonable “because they are conducted as part of a general regulatory scheme in furtherance of an administrative purpose, namely, to prevent the carrying of weapons or explosives aboard aircraft, and thereby to prevent hijackings.” The court went on to say, “A particular airport security-screening search is constitutionally reasonable provided that it is no more extensive nor intensive than necessary, in the light of current technology, to detect the presence of weapons or explosives, and that it is confined in good faith to that purpose.”

The courts have not yet been asked to review the constitutionality of the new TSA scanners. Is the search more extensive or intensive than necessary to detect the presence of weapons or explosives? Who cares! We’re safer now. It seems that the new scanners will be accepted by most people as just another inconvenience of air travel. Being stripped naked in an airport is now merely an administrative procedure. Raping and sodomizing naked prisoners in Abu Ghraib was merely harsh interrogation techniques.

On the bright side, the free-market economy has already responded. A Colorado man has developed undergarments with special body scanner-blocking fig leaves to hide your privates. And, with the new scanners you can leave your shoes on. See? It’s not so bad after all. With our fig leaves and shoes on we can still pretend we are free.

Or we can stop pretending. In 1995 people in the city of Montgomery, Alabama, stopped pretending and initiated a bus boycott that cascaded into the national civil rights movement. They were no longer willing to pretend that it was okay to sit in the back of the bus. So stop flying. Offer no opportunity for the government to scrutinize your naked body.

But that’s such a bother. We already know how to be free. We’ll go shopping, come home and watch TV and eat until we’re all shapeless blobs, and then rightfully leave our shoes on while we’re scanned. That’s real American freedom! •
A free press is essential to democracy. It writes history, shapes public opinion, and consequently controls the future. If the people rule the press, they rule themselves. They are able to put whatever or whomever they want on trial — the murderer, the embezzler, the Wall Street executive, even the entire system of government.

But we know that democracy, in the United States, is dead. The power of many voices has disappeared, and in its place, a single, centralized voice has grown. The people do not own the press and they do not rule themselves — the private sector does; it is that private sector, those corporate owners, that shapes public opinion. They write the history we teach to each new generation and they dictate our future.

It is because of this that less and less quality information is made available to the public. And now, after Obama’s campaign built on hope for a democracy, we more often than not have none. We live with the same hushed journalism we fell victim to during the Bush years. In the U.S., against the will of its people. As reported in Censored story 6, U.S. tax dollars have gone to support and fund the Taliban. In hopes of protecting soldiers, payment is given to insurgents to gain safe passage through checkpoints in Afghanistan. The article reports that, “an estimated 10 percent of the Pentagon’s logistics contract worth hundreds of millions of dollars are paid to insurgents as the U.S. government funds the very forces American troops are fighting.” An example of such a contract exists with Host National Trucking, which oversees U.S. delivery of supplies to bases in Afghanistan.

These articles bring up points worth exploring: The U.S. started a war in Iraq and continues to fund terrorist groups in Afghanistan without the consent of its citizens. Manipulated by George W. Bush, Americans were led to believe 9/11 and the Iraq War were somehow connected, despite the absence of any realistic proof. On September 7, 2003, Bush stated in a national address that, “For America, there will be no going back to the era before September 11th, 2001... We have learned that terrorist attacks are not caused by the use of strength. They are invited by the perception...
of weakness. And the surest way to avoid attacks on our own people is to engage the enemy where he lives and plans. We are fighting that enemy in Iraq and Afghanistan today so that we do not meet him again on our own streets, in our own cities.”

All major networks have perpetuated this association by airing this speech and others like it. Fabrications such as Bush’s can be classified as state crimes against democracy, or SCADs.

Unlike conspiracy theories, which “speculate each suspicious event in isolation,” SCADs approach the investigation of events in a comparative fashion. Lance deHaven-Smith explains in chapter six of Censored that conspiracy theories promote belief in “widespread but unpredictable” crime among the political elite. SCADs, on the other hand, holistically research suspect behavior that contributes to a long-lasting (and false) public impression of world events. These crimes are at the heart of the Truth Emergency, and kick off the second section of Censored.

Chapters six and seven, authored by Smith and Griffin, respectively, examine the events surrounding September 11, the most relevant SCAD as of recent. They do not assert that George W. Bush planned and executed all events of that day. They do not accuse the CIA of plotting to destroy all three buildings in New York City (see Chapter Seven of Censored 2011) and part of the Pentagon. Instead, they offer compelling facts, scientific and otherwise. Despite the hasty and unsupervised cleanup of Ground Zero, chemical tests were conducted on some of the rubble. Samples showed traces of a compound called thermite. While it is not an explosive, thermite is most commonly used in grenades and controlled demolitions to expose metal to extremely high temperatures, thus causing them to catch fire. With chemistry comes engineering and architecture; all buildings went down at a free fall speed. More than 1,000 architects and engineers agree that a building could not fall at such a speed due to the impact of a plane. Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth, an organization founded by Richard Gage (a member of the American Institute of Architecture) has obtained more than 1,300 signatures of architects and engineers demanding an independent investigation of the events of 9/11, citing the possible use of explosives as motivation. These scientifically based findings are often written off by corporate news media for fear of losing credibility, causing them to get no recognition by the general public.

As media consumers, we are offered information and pseudo-information and expected to discern the difference. The truth is that it’s nearly impossible without perpetually asking the question, “What stories aren’t being told?”

Self-informing
But all of these issues, at times, can seem so distant from us. Luckily, Vermont Commons’ publisher, Rob Williams, is featured in “Project Censored International,” the third section of Censored 2011. Designed to “lay out proactive paths of democratic possibilities for the future,” this section serves as a positive conclusion to a series of critical findings. The people at Project Censored haven’t compelled you to pick up Censored, the entire chapter on secession should do the trick.

Williams explains how secession is the “dirtiest word in U.S. politics” due to its unfortunate association with the Confederacy. It is this association that most likely has caused a lack of media coverage, despite that “thirty of our fifty states in our U.S. Empire are home to active secessionist organizations.” After explaining the reason and logic behind secession, and why Vermont specifically could benefit, Williams offers the Censored audience a set of guiding principles to help reinvent a journalism more suitable for this century.

Two principles in particular speak to the Truth Emergency in terms of a solution: provide news for people, not profit; and institute collaborative funding. If information is generated by and for the people, it is those people who control history. Also, we shouldn’t strive for objectivity, but rather we should assert our power in subjectivity, and fully embrace our values and goals as a news media platform. In doing so, we are free to report on whatever we deem important. Nothing is written off as too dangerous. Thus we contribute to the solution, as opposed to being overwhelmed by the problem.

That problem is as follows: As media consumers, we are offered information and pseudo-information and expected to discern the difference. While it seems like a simple task, the truth is that it’s nearly impossible without perpetually asking the question, “What stories aren’t being told?” In a fast-paced society such as ours, there simply is not enough time to thoroughly question each piece of news, and even less time to do independent research. That is where this book comes in.

Still, some direction when reading Censored 2011: Do so with a critical eye. Evaluate as you should any other source of news. Don’t fall victim to cognitive dissonance but make yourself open to the truth. (All warnings, I believe, the good people at Project Censored would agree with.) It is with a sharp and careful eye that we will make tangible progress in the fight to find truth, purity, and reliability in news media.

Perhaps there is no better time than now to take the press into our own hands, to hold ourselves accountable for maintaining truth in our own lives. Read a variety of news sources — local, national and international, left wing and right wing, satirical and tragic. Declare independence from the hyper-reality put forth by corporate news media and take responsibility for our own enlightenment. Assert our power as the antidote to the Truth Emergency.

Let’s hear it, Vermont. Go forth and self-inform.

Free Vermont Media contributor Taylor Silvestri. PHOTO PROVIDED BY TAYLOR SILVESTRI
Transition Town Putney faced a decision this past June 1: They had just received permission to use a prime piece of land across from the food co-op. Would they start a community garden right away, or wait until 2011? Though by June many gardeners have completed their first plantings, it was still early enough to start many vegetables from seed or transplants – if they moved quickly.

According to Transition Town Putney Initiating Group member Paul LeVasseur, it was local farmer Howard Prussack’s encouragement that decided them.

“You have to start now,” Prussack told them. “This land is fabulous, and you can never tell what’s going to happen when people start garden- ing here.” Prussack volunteered to contribute a truckload of transplants to start the project.

In two days, community members had snapped up the 22 10-foot-by-20-foot plots offered. By June 10, the planting and transplanting had begun. In those 10 days the Putney School had plowed an acre of land, most of which was planted in buckwheat. The plots were rototilled, and another farmer spread composted manure. Even in late November, according to LeVasseur, the plots were “gorgeous in their fall vestments, and in the summer the garden was an exceptional draw for people when the plots flourished in their summer splendor.”

The Putney Farmers’ Market came together about as quickly. LeVasseur said that 35 to 40 people showed up at a forum on whether to have a farmers’ market, and decided to go ahead with it if they were able to positively answer a number of remaining questions. Within a week, interviews with 45 farmers and three managers of farmers’ markets gave them the information they needed. Conditions were right for a Putney Farmers’ Market. They started up around September 1.

“We had six market days this fall,” LeVasseur said, “and we sold $28,000 worth of food and crafts, primarily food, which far exceeded what people expected we’d be able to do in the first year.”

Not all of Transition Town Putney’s projects spring out of the ground as fast as weeds in July. Initiating Group member Dan Hoviss described their local currency project, which is methodi- cally researching how to design the currency. They’ve completed a study of paper versus plastic, and Hoviss explained that both had numerous pros and cons, “but paper has the most pros and plastic has the most cons. We realized that the short end of it is that paper is a renewable resource and plastic represents everything we hate.” They’re still working out issues like what the coverage region will be (Putney? Windham County? southern Vermont?), and whether to make the currency itself a vehicle for investing in renewable energy.

Overall, the group has matured tremendously quickly. They held their first Transition Handbook discussions in the fall of 2009, formed an initiating group in January 2010, and by December 2010, they opened a small office on Main Street. They hold three to five events a week, each one attracting 35-40 people, said LeVasseur.

And that community garden? The Transition Town doubled the number of plots to be available in 2011, to 44, and they are all spoken for – with a waiting list. Seeing as waiting is not something Transition Town Putney does a lot of, they may well identify enough new community garden spaces by spring to satisfy the demand for plots.

More information at transition.putney.net and transitionvermont.ning.com/group/transition putney.
Food in Uncertain Times: How to Grow and Store the 5 Crops You Need to Survive

An Interview with Carol Deppe

By Makenna Goodman

In an age of erratic weather and instability, it’s increasingly important to develop a greater self-reliance when it comes to food. And because of this, more than ever before, farmers are developing new gardening techniques that help achieve a greater resilience. Longtime gardener and scientist Carol Deppe, in her new book *The Resilient Gardener: Food Production and Self-Reliance in Uncertain Times*, offers a wealth of unique and expansive information for serious home gardeners and farmers who are seeking optimistic advice. Do you want to know more about the five crops you need to survive through the next thousand years? What about tips for drying summer squash, for your winter soups? Ever thought of keeping ducks on your land? Read on.

Many gardeners (both beginners and more serious growers) come across obstacles they might not have planned for. In your new book, you talk about the need for real gardening techniques for both good times and bad. What is the first step toward achieving this kind of resilience?

The basic issues are getting more control over our food, getting lots of higher quality and more delicious food, and enhancing the resilience of our food supply. There are three ways to do that. The first is through local buying patterns and trade. A second is through knowing how to store or process food that is available locally, whether we grow it ourselves or not. The third is gardening. In *The Resilient Gardener*, I talk as much about storing and using food as growing it.

I love gardening, but not everyone is in a position to garden every year of their lives.

However the person who has learned to make spectacular applesauce or cider or apple butter or pies can often trade some of the processed products for all the apples needed. Buying local food supports local food resilience. A couple hundred pounds of gourmet-quality potatoes tucked away in the garage -- potatoes that you have learned to store optimally -- represent serious food security, whether you grew them or bought them from a local farmer right after the harvest. Our buying and trading patterns and our skill at storing and using food as well as gardening are all part of our food resilience. All can serve as the starting point to begin taking greater control over our food.

Gardening for resilience, as you discuss, also means choosing your crop varieties for optimum self-reliance and hardiness. What’s the most fantastic quality of each of the five crops you talk about in your book — potatoes, corn, beans, squash, and eggs?

Potatoes are a great source of both carbohydrates and protein. They have protein levels comparable to the most protein-rich grains by the time you adjust for water. They yield more carbohydrate per square foot than anything we can grow in temperate climates. They yield more protein per square foot than anything we can grow except beans. They have good levels of vitamin C and significant amounts of calcium and other minerals. They are the easiest of all staple crops to grow. They yield much more carbohydrate and protein than anything else per unit labor. Small grains take fine seed beds, meaning tillers, tractors, or draft animals.

Grains and beans are the ultimate survival crops because they are so long-storing. It is stored grains and beans we would need if a planet-wide disaster such as a comet strike or mega-volcano wiped out agriculture worldwide for an entire year or more. Grains are not as easy to grow as potatoes, though. We grow corn, the easiest of all grains to grow and process on a small scale. Corn is also, in areas where it grows well, by far the highest yielding of the grains. In addition, unlike the small grains, you can grow corn with nothing but a shovel or heavy hoe.

Grain legumes, that is, beans, peas, tepary, garbanzos, cowpeas, lentils, soybeans, and others, keep well and are prime for a little beyond a year. There are many species that are associated with specific regions or growing patterns. So we plant fava beans in fall and overwinter them, for example, garbs in early spring, and common beans and cowpeas and teparies in spring to grow during summer. We prefer to plant one variety of each of five species rather than five varieties of one species. This helps give us disease resilience.

We grow a lot of squash. We grow lots of winter squash of gourmet varieties that make spectacular food, and we know how to harvest, cure, and store it optimally. We grow lots of summer squash for both fresh eating and drying. The dried summer squash is one of our major long-storing staples. Dried sliced summer squash of the right varieties makes wonderful soups and stews and chips. I have had a soup made mostly from six-year-old dried summer squash that was as delicious as it was the year I dried it.

Many people cannot make long-chain omega-3 fatty acids of the sorts we need from plant omega-3s. Some people can do the conversion reactions. Others cannot. So some people can be vegetarians. Others cannot. I’m one of the people who needs to have my long-chain omega-3s provided to me by eating animal products. Commercial animal products don’t work. The omega-3s have been stripped out of them by the unnatural ways the animals are raised. I need grass-fed meat or milk, or cold-water wild fish, or free-range eggs. Of these, it’s the laying flock that is easiest to keep on a home scale. So to create a full diet, in addition to my garden, I need a home laying flock.

So there is a chapter in *The Resilient Gardener* on keeping the home chicken or duck laying flock, integrating them with your gardening, and feeding them and growing produce in ways that are both sustainable and productive. Read an extended version of this interview with Carol Deppe at [www.chelseagreen.com](http://www.chelseagreen.com).
The world produces enough food for its people and its livestock, though (largely because they are so poor) some 800 million are permanently malnourished. The number of farm animals on earth has risen fivefold since 1950: humans are now outnumbered three to one. Livestock already consume half the world’s grain, and their numbers are still growing almost exponentially ... As a meat-eater, I’ve long found it convenient to categorize veganism as a response to animal suffering or a health fad. Faced with these figures, it now seems plain that it is the only ethical response to what is arguably the world’s most urgent social justice issue.

The state of affairs that Monbiot describes is unambiguously iniquitous; if there is one single injustice for which our economic system could be held responsible above all others, it is the fact that it has, time and again over the last 200 years, diverted food out of the hands of the hungry and funneled it down animals’ throats to provide meat for the rich. Nothing written anywhere in this book should be taken to imply that depriving the poor of food to provide luxuries for the rich is anything but, as Jeremy Rifkin puts it, ‘a form of human evil’. Nowhere in this book do I put the case for eating lots of meat, because there isn’t one. Meat is an extravagance.

However, to conclude that veganism is the ‘only ethical response’ is to take a big leap into an almost muddy pond. The fact that some people get all the meat, while others starve, is not in itself an indictment of meat, any more than the fact that some people can afford their own car while others have to walk is an argument against buses (though it is an argument against private cars). The vegan response brings to mind the Tupamaros’ slogan: ‘Everybody dances or nobody dances’. This is fair enough, but is it not better that everybody should have the opportunity to dance, rather than nobody? And if there is not enough space on the floor for all to do so at once, why not take it in turns?

This book is concerned with the environmental ethics of eating meat. The central question it asks is not whether killing animals is right or wrong, but whether farming animals for meat is sustainable. From this springs a range of secondary questions: Is meat-eating a waste of resources? Is meat a way of robbing the hungry to fatten the well-fed? Does meat-eating cause disproportionate levels of global warming? Does the rearing of animals for meat deprive wild animals of habitat and the world of wilderness? These are charges that many vegans and vegetarians have leveled against meat-eaters and there is substance in them. They deserve addressing, and when I began this book I was not aware that anyone had ever tried to do so very comprehensively – though now, five years later, it is a hot topic.

Meat: A Benign Extravagance began as a personal enquiry, grew into a research project, and has ended up as a collection of essays with pretensions to the coherence of a book. I embarked upon it because I like eating meat and keeping livestock, and I wanted to address doubts I had about the sustainability and environmental justice of my way of life. The conflict between vegans and animal farmers has loomed large in my life: as an agricultural worker, smallholder, environmental journalist and hippie, I have frequently come into contact with both. Too many farmers have a narrow perspective of the social and environmental issues that confront us; and too many vegans have an equally limited understanding of the way nature works. It helps me, and I hope others, to get the issues down on paper.

I also embarked upon it because a gap appeared in my life where I had time to spare, but no opportunity to get away. The evidence I produce is not, alas, derived from splodging around farms in Wellington boots or trekking across savannah with nomadic herders. It consists of a trawl through what academics pompously call ‘the literature’, though whether it is peer-reviewed or not is not my main criterion. The farms and nomadic herds I view through the window of other people’s accounts. The only time I get my hands dirty is when I try to sift out the bullshit.

Read more of Meat: A Benign Extravagance at www.chelseagreen.com
I half-jokingly suggested about a year ago that animal manure—used livestock, horse, and chicken bedding—was going to be the hottest commodity on the Chicago Board of Trade one of these days. Shortly after that I got a call from a close acquaintance who manages an awesome business of growing 8,000 acres of corn and soybeans—which he knows I consider insane. He wanted to tell me something I never expected to hear from him: he was thinking of going into the feedlot beef business. I reminded him that this is rarely profitable in Ohio except as a tax shelter, but he said he didn’t care if it only broke even. It was the manure that he was after, for fertilizer. And he had not read what I had been writing in that regard. Holy shit. I almost dropped the phone. Most of the farmers in my neck of the cornfields agree with what one of them told me over a martini one day: “The only shit that is going to drop on this farm is mine and my wife’s.” He much preferred fertilizing with anhydrous ammonia (one whiff of which could kill him and his wife).

My 8,000-acre friend is no fool, believe me. There are indications now that such a seemingly absurd prediction about manure might not be so absurd after all. Even the agricultural colleges (almost always among the last to recognize either agricultural or cultural shifts) are scheduling what Ohio State University calls Manure Science Review days. The main reason that manure is suddenly seen as a science is that chemical fertilizer prices are on the rise. Yes, they rise and fall with every paranoid scuttlebutt of the marketplace, but the general direction is definitely north. The price of a specialty fertilizer like ammonium polyphosphate is nearly $1,000 a ton as I write. Deposits of potash in Canada, which we have long relied on for potassium fertilizer, are dwindling, and there is no other known supply as readily available. There is much talk of opening a huge phosphorus mining operation in the South American rainforest, which will hardly be hailed with joy by environmentalists. Natural gas, the major source of commercial nitrogen fertilizer, is rising in cost as other users compete for it. In fact, there are reasons to believe that the era of reliance on manufactured and mined fertilizers is passing. A society so utterly urbanized as ours may not want to face up to what that means, but the end of cheap chemical fertilizer would be almost as earth-shaking as a nuclear bomb explosion.

If we run out of cheap sources of commercial fertilizer, there will be no way to avoid a precipitous decline in crop yields, no matter how rapidly all farmers try to switch to all-organic methods. And as they switch, the demand for organic fertilizers will also rise precipitously. It has taken us about one hundred years to reduce soil organic matter to dangerously low levels—from about 5 percent on average, to below 2 percent—and experts say it might take at least that long to build them back up again using organic methods on a large scale. Getting all the manure and other organic wastes needed to maintain yields high enough to support rising populations without a full complement of commercial fertilizers would be an enormous challenge requiring new agricultural and cultural attitudes.

It is difficult, however, to suppress a smile at the irony of the situation. For years shit has been seen as something so repugnant that the word itself was scrubbed from polite conversation. The real reason for the ancient prejudice between urban and rural cultures was that before Fels-Naptha—the favorite heavy-duty farm soap—the odor of manure lingered on the skin and clothing of farmers. To become truly civilized meant to escape the barn and pretend that excrement was not a part of life—flush it and forget it. Even farmers bought into the notion. In 1961 Farm Journal, the leading farm magazine of the day, published an article arguing that manure was not worth hauling to the field. To its credit, the magazine renounced the error of its ways in April of 1976 and rather lamely admitted that, in fact, manure was very much worth applying to cropland.
Phoom! It was that impossible-to-describe sound that happens when you’re too close to the blast to hear the full roar.

I could see nothing but orange, black, and red as I was engulfed in an intense, all-consuming heat. It was immediately sickening, and I began to process the fact that I was in serious trouble. At that same instant, I was knocked off my feet and slid headfirst down a muddy slope, plunging into water saturated with chemicals. The fire was overhead now, and I was completely disoriented. Crawling on my belly, underwater, unable to breathe, I was trying to get away from the heat that had permeated my skin. I crawled for what seemed like hours, though it was only seconds—everything in slow motion.

Suddenly I felt strong hands grab me, pulling me from the ditch I had been blown into. I was doused with ice-cold water from a drinking-water can, causing me to draw a sharp breath. I was alive. Ken, an oil field truck driver I knew well, was shouting in my face, asking if I was okay. But I couldn’t see him clearly or hear a thing. As my breathing improved, I came around and became aware that I was almost completely undressed. The blast had blown off most of my clothes, including my boots, hard hat, watch, and the sunglasses that had protected my eyes. My jeans were around my ankles. I was in one piece, but definitely a “crispy critter.” My mustache and the hair on the front and left side of my head were fried. I was covered in frac gel, and the skin on my face and left side felt like it was on fire. I was lucky that the breath had been knocked out of me, saving my lungs from ingesting flame.

I breathed deeply as Ken doused me with ice water again and smeared me with Silvadene, a commonly used burn cream. He had himself been burned in a refinery fire a few years previously, and he carried a burn kit in his truck. I was lucky. Today I carry little physical evidence from that flash fire. Landing in the ditch had saved me from critical injury. But I think about the incident every day: This brief brush with death changed me forever.

It was 1981. I was 28 years old, superintendent for operations with a small, Dallas-based independent oil and gas producer, and had just survived an up-close-and-personal encounter with a pit fire on a location where I had been completing a Cotton Valley gas well in East Texas. This well, over 11,000 feet deep, had been nothing but trouble from the start. We had beaten our brains out during the drilling phase, stuck pipe multiple times, dealt with drill pipe leaks, and struggled to get production casing to bottom. On top of hole trouble and mechanical failures, we had to deal with a grumpy landowner who was more than happy to show off the hole he’d blown through his dining room wall with a shotgun, trying to kill his son-in-law. The son-in-law had physically abused the landowner’s daughter, and Dad didn’t like it. Welcome to East Texas.

Read more of Disaster On The Horizon at www.chelseagreen.com
In the mid 1980s Vermont’s in-depth state and local election coverage was handled by local newspapers and, in particular, home-grown radio news teams. Voters could tune into WDOT and WJOY and listen to meaningful candidate debates and live election results, highly regarded by the public and political “insiders” alike.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s this news tradition began to unravel, as large radio groups bought up smaller local stations. We experienced the dramatic effects of “consolidation” upon the quality of local news and election coverage. Burdened with high debt, national radio groups cut costs, starting with personnel. Trusted news departments were the first to go. Once one station moved from reporting to “rip and read” news, it was a small step for the others to follow.

As one newspaper reporter at the state’s largest daily remembers, “When I started at the Burlington Free Press, I’d wake up and hear about stories I could cover later in the day. By the late 1980s I’d wake up to hear the story I had covered the day before.” In short order, radio stations had gone from the front end to the back end of the news cycle.

Inspired, in part, by the experience of listening to election results on the radio and trying to piece them together, CCTV started Channel 17/Town Meeting TV (www.channel17.org) in time for election season in November 1990. As a regional government-access TV channel, we were just in time to fill the void of in-depth election coverage and revive a tradition necessary for democracy to occur.

Channel 17 and other community-access channels have continued to serve this important function in communities across the state. Every town meeting, primary and general-election season Channel 17 dives in with countless interviews and live election results. In 2010, we produced 55 live election forums for statewide offices (governor to auditor), national seats (for the U.S. House and Senate) and scores of local seats (Vermont House and Senate, assistant judges).

Our live election-night coverage sets a new standard and is watched by people across the state. We bring in feeds from statewide election events, live interviews and up-to-the-minute results (with a focus on our region), that air on cable TV and at www.channel17.org. In an effort to expand our reach and impact, we partner with publications such as Seven Days (www.sevendaysvt.org), and statewide organizations like Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility (http://vbsr.org/).

Over the past several years, major news and media organizations have risen to fill the election-coverage void. Vermont Public Television and WCAX-TV premiered live debates in the mid 1990s. But the 2010 season was distinct for the rise of local on-line coverage. News services such as Vermont Digger (http://vtdigger.org/) and blogs such as Green Mountain Daily (http://www.greenmountaindaily.com/), Vermont Tiger (http://www.vermonttiger.com/), and Vermont News Guy (http://www.vermontnewsguy.com/ -- recently retired, but the posts are still available) put their own pressure on the mainstream press to expand and improve their reporting. As a result we’ve seen even more debates, live press conferences and feedback loops for citizens to weigh in.

We’re proud of the role that Channel 17 and public-access community media TV plays in bringing decision makers to the people during election season (and throughout the year). There is no substitute for locally controlled media, whether it is local radio or community media or Vermont’s growing on-line news services. Together, we must do all that we can to keep the door to local government open if Vermont-style democracy is going to survive. •
In November came my birth-day. I passed the day exactly as I pleased: There was Fred Eaglesmith on the hi-fi, a fire in the cookstove, half a dead pig on the kitchen table, and a large butcher's knife at my disposal. My boys busied themselves at the stove, frying bits of meat and eating them with unreserved gusto, while my wife and I reduced the pig to manageable parts. Later, the rims of our fingernails still crusted with blood, we ate cake at my parents' house. By 9:00 we were in bed; by 9:10 I was deep into complicated dreams that revolved around slabs of bacon and endless links of sausage. It was in all regards an excellent birthday, and I can only hope to repeat it next year.

Except: I am getting older. As observations go, this one is not particularly astute: Of course I am getting older. Who the hell isn't? And yet, I have reached a point in the arc of my life at which I can no longer avoid grappling with the finality of aging and its inevitable ramifications.

Like most of you, I was born and raised in an era during which so many of the demands of human survival have been accomplished by machine, rather than muscle. Having never known anything different, I can perhaps be excused for my failure to notice that the historical precedence of this arrangement is extremely short, and not likely to get much longer. Soon, the scales that measure the worth of a man or woman will again begin to tip in favor of what he or she is able to accomplish with the body, rather than with the mind. The times in which we live allow us the great luxury of conflating the words “labor” and “work.” Most of us work for a living, but very few of us labor for it. We would be wise not to believe that these terms will always be so seamlessly interchangeable, that many more of us will not need to depend on our physicality to see us through.

I think of this some mornings, when I awake before my family to dress in the winter-dark chill of our home. In recent months I have noticed a new recalcitrance in my muscles, a stubborn resistance as I bend to unfurl a sock over a knobby foot, or lay a stick of ash atop the glowing coals of the prior evening’s fire. It is still a fleeting thing; by the time I am fully clothed, and the ash has given itself to flame, it is gone. By chore time, I can throw hay and haul water no worse or better than I could a decade ago, and I have all but forgotten that some-day I will no longer be able to make this claim.

But it is enough to color the view of my future and that of my family. Do I have time, before my too-humble body slides further into obsolescence, to develop an infrastructure that will help my sons navigate the New American Reality? Will my boys even want whatever meager legacy I might provide, or will they flee for greener pastures? Will there even be greener pastures?

It is not for the first time that I envy the quiet stoicism of our cows, their future no more a concern than the next tuft of grass or strand of hay. They, too, will fail, and when they do, their end will come in as much time as it takes to pull a trigger, and they will die awash in my gratitude. Am I taking or am I giving? I cannot be sure, but I suspect it is both. Perhaps not in equal measure, but surely: Both.

Still, for today, they eat. For today, they are led into the barn at milking, where they feel the long strokes of a brush across their flanks, and they nuzzle into a coveted flake of sweet rowen. For now, they have everything they need and very much more.

I would do well to remember that, for now, I am no different. This is my time. I shall not take it for granted.
Every viable energy technology has come into existence through the singular focus of the people developing and marketing and lobbying their technology. Environmentalist groups also usually focus on a particular issue or category. Because of this, government policies regarding energy have been driven largely by groups and individuals who are specifically focused on their valid but relatively narrow category.

The results for Vermont: big corporate interests continue to dominate, with power becoming more concentrated instead of distributed; climate change dominates the environmental debates instead of holistic and locally relevant perspectives on sustainability; we’ve sold our in-state hydro resources for a fraction of their value, while we agonize about the environmental impacts of micro-hydro expansion; we’ve become dependent on one foreign electricity supplier in Hydro Quebec, to replace our dependence on one out-of-state-owned, obsolete nuclear plant and pushed the decommissioning costs for that plant onto future generations; and we’ve become entirely dependent on imported fuel oil and propane to heat our homes instead of local, renewable, biomass resources.

There are few people or organizations taking a holistic, unbiased view of energy in Vermont, and we’ve had a complete lack of leadership from the feds or Montpelier. So how do we move forward from here? What should Vermont’s energy priorities be for the next 10 years?

Should we make aggressive investments to become energy independent so our economy has a strong foundation? Or should we just rely on regional resources like Canadian hydropower and the investor-owned utilities behind the natural gas-fired New England grid?


Should we focus on wind power? Solar? Hydro? Nuclear? Biomass? How do we do this and still preserve our landscape? Where is the low-hanging fruit?

The competing interests between each energy sector and various industry and environmental organizations have created a lot of tension and attention around energy lately. I see a lot of “analysis paralysis” where experts and laymen debate the issues endlessly, and meanwhile very little gets done. Is climate change really caused by carbon? Wood smoke is bad for the air, right? What if bats fly into a wind turbine? What about the rare-earth metals in solar panels?

We have endless concerns and questions about the fruit of a specific tree, but nobody is looking at the whole forest. We need to take a step back, as a state, and take a holistic view of our opportunities and challenges.

Here’s the energy-forest that I see in Vermont, and the fruit that we should focus on cultivating:

1. Becoming more energy-independent with renewable energy will create jobs, save us money and give our economy a rock-solid, long-term foundation, regardless of the polarizing climate-change debates.

2. Vermont forests grow more biomass each year than it would take to heat every residential and commercial building in the state with modern high-efficiency wood stoves and wood-boilers that pay for themselves in less than five years while cutting annual fuel bills by up to 50 percent.

continued on page 26
3. If we replace all propane and heating oil with sustainably harvested wood by 2020, Vermont will keep more than $1 billion in the local economies and the average home will save at least $2,000 per year, while we create thousands of jobs.  
4. We could reduce the energy demand from buildings by 20 percent through efficiency/weatherization, with investments that would pay for themselves in three years.

5. The critical missing elements in renewable energy are financing and access to the grid. A well-designed “feed-in tariff” that forces power companies to pay cash values to any electricity customer who feeds clean energy into the grid would create the investment-climate that would cause capital to pour into Vermont for renewable-energy installations, while actually reducing our medium- and long-term power rates. Vermont’s first feed-in-tariff was limited to utility-scale installations. It must be expanded to allow any home, farm, or business to be paid a fair price for the power it generates, which is known as a “micro feed-in tariff.”

6. Every Vermont property owner – residential and commercial – today has the option to produce all of their annual electricity with an investment in a net-metered solar electric system installed at their home/business, or as part of an off-site, group-net-metered project. Today’s solar system prices translate to a retail price per kWh of less than 15 cents for the next 30 years without any Vermont tax subsidies. Most Vermonters are paying the power company more than that today. In Vermont, solar electric and solar hot water has a 10-year breakeven point with 20-plus years of free power after that, for any home or business.

7. A new nuclear power plant the size of Vermont Yankee would cost between $7 billion and $9 billion, and would provide enough power to cover most of Vermont’s total power use. But we’d be reliant on a dwindling global supply of increasingly expensive uranium, when Vermont Yankee already can’t compete with Canadian hydropower. If Vermont invested $7 billion in distributed solar electricity, that would generate 100 percent of Vermont’s annual residential power requirement (about 50 percent of our total power demand) without any fuel costs for the next 30 years. Is there any question which investment makes more sense?

8. It would take less than 1 percent of our current open land being devoted to solar power to provide 100 percent of Vermont’s net-annual electricity, including residential and commercial use (which translates to about 500 square feet of roof/ground space per home). Solar power does not provide a constant base load of energy, since it only works during sunlight hours, so Vermont still needs other sources of power like the New England grid or hydro-power to provide the steady base load and cover solar’s gaps. But on an annual basis, with net-metering we could produce all of our electricity needs (meaning everyone would have an annual net-power bill of $0), with just 1 percent of our land being devoted to solar power.  

9. It would also take less than 1 percent of our land to produce all of Vermont’s electricity with wind power. But a wind-dominant energy portfolio in Vermont would require industrialization of the majority of our ridgelines. Otherwise, because of our terrain, wind power has limited potential in Vermont. However, wind power makes a lot of sense for certain communities to explore what is known as community wind. Community wind means the turbines are locally owned and sized to produce power for local use. We could learn to love the view of wind turbines on a ridge, just as we love the view of the scarred mountainsides otherwise known as ski resorts.  

10. Burning wood to generate electricity is horribly inefficient, except for district-heating systems that produce some electricity as a byproduct. The only efficient use of wood to produce electricity is known as a “heat-led combined-heat-and-power system,” where the plant operates primarily when heat is needed, with electricity as a byproduct. Our biomass resources should be prioritized for heating needs and forest products, not electricity generation.

The renewable energy industry has grown largely out of admirable environmental motivations, accelerating in recent years with increased fears about climate change. Because of the maturation of renewable energy technologies, today solar and wind power are economically viable sources of electricity, and biomass heating is an economic no-brainer compared to oil and propane.

And while Vermont has an opportunity to lead by example, Vermont’s electricity portfolio actually has negligible impact on climate change either way because Vermont represents such a tiny fraction of the global electricity demand, and also because most of our electricity currently comes from low-carbon sources: hydropower and the New England grid, with its high percentage of power generated by natural gas-fired facilities. Transportation and heating fuel are by far Vermont’s largest carbon-footprint factors. Re-localized clean energy, jobs, economic savings, peak oil, and energy security should be Vermont’s main motivating factors regarding our electricity portfolio – not climate change.

Therefore, I suggest that policymakers and activist groups focus on these key questions:

1. What sustainable energy resources does Vermont really have, and what policies will encourage investment in developing these resources? (Hint, Vermont has no natural gas, uranium, oil, or coal, but we have lots of water, wood, wind, and sunlight.)

2. How can we finance our way toward energy independence, while saving money? •
I
f the borders of the Republic closed down tomorrow, it is unclear whether or not Vermont could feed itself. But if we could, there would be no shortage of recipes on how our local products should be prepared. My guess is that Vermont has more food writers per capita than any state in the Empire. And I am not just talking about people who keep personal blogs about what they had for dinner last night; I am talking about nationally known food writers and publishers who could keep us cooking forever. Every year, at least a handful of new books on cooking come out of the state, and 2010 was no exception. I wanted to share my thoughts on a couple of those books with Vermont Commons readers.

**Good Meat: The Complete Guide to Sourcing and Cooking Sustainable Meat** by Deborah Krasner

In 2003 author Deborah Krasner won a James Beard Award for her book on Olive Oil and since then she has been learning and writing about sustainably raised meat. Encouraged by her husband’s favorable check-up after a year of eating entirely grass-fed and -pastured meat, she began researching how eliminating butter and desserts, but eating a “prodigious” amount of meat could result in a 40-point decrease in his LDL cholesterol count. Krasner realized that she was onto something and wanted to show people that it is possible to eat healthy, fairly priced, and sustainable meat.

This larger-format 400-page book is beautiful, even to a Vermonter who is familiar with many of the farm scenes displayed throughout the book. Part reference book, part cookbook, Good Meat is divided into seven chapters that include beef, lamb, pork, rabbit, poultry, eggs, and side dishes. The chapters on meat begin with a discussion of the protein including differences in taste, nutrition, and sustainability between grass-fed pasture-raised and factory-farmed varieties. Next there is a section on cut sheets for people who want to purchase a whole or partial animal directly from a farm. Deborah warns us about what many first-time whole-animal buyers learn the hard way: the challenge with ordering a whole animal is knowing what cuts you are sacrificing each time you make a choice for another cut. I was able to figure out after reading her book that the reason I didn’t get tenderloins with this year’s pig was that I got sirloin chops instead.

Next come the recipes – and there are lots of them, each highlighting a different cut. Krasner wants to help people make affordable meals with local meat, and that is evident in her offerings such as Jacob’s Cattle Bean Soup with Berkshire Ham Bone, Schmaltzy Chopped Chicken Liver, and Oxtail Cooked in Sherry. She emphasizes that not only can good meals come from parts of the animal that today are normally thrown out, but that it’s the humane and sustainable way to use the animals who give their lives to feed us. Deborah’s recipes support the Localvore mantra to “eat locally and spice globally,” with recipes that draw on a wide array of cooking traditions – French, Indian, North African, Italian, Chinese, German, Korean and Cuban to name a few.

**Recipes from the Root Cellar: 270 Fresh Ways to Enjoy Winter Vegetables** by Andrea Chesman

Andrea Chesman is likely the most prolific of all Vermont food writers with more than 20 cookbooks to her name. Chesman came to Vermont in the 1970s as part of the back-to-the-land movement and worked for Storey Publications as an editor. Her love of food and professional cooking experience during college made the transition from editor to writer a fairly easy one. Much of the food that Chesman prepares for her family comes from their garden, which has been the

---

**Localvore Living: Books For Cooks**

Robin McDermott

---

**Columbia Fleece Vest:**

$38.00

**R-Tek Stretch Fleece Beanie:**

$8.00

Includes 5,000 stitches embroidery to basic design library.

(mention ad when calling)

802.496.4224

screen printing
embroidery
graphic design
promotional products
inspiration for many of her books. In 1998 Chesman was nominated for a James Beard Award for the first edition of her book New Vegetarian Grill, and she has written other books on pickling, roasting and serving up the harvest. As her Ripton, Vermont, neighbor Bill McKibben observes, “Absolutely anyone can eat locally in midsummer – all you need to do is boil water for corn on the cob. But March? Then you need Andrea Chesman by your side.” That’s right, Chesman is able to entice even the most finicky eater to crave humble winter vegetables such as turnips, beets, and Brussels sprouts.

Chesman does the same thing for vegetables that Krasner does for meat; she introduces you to the full range of winter vegetables and describes how to buy, store, and prepare each. Chesman describes the recipes as simple home cooking, and many can be made with a handful of ingredients that you likely have in your pantry. Her college cooking stint was at a Chinese restaurant, so several of her recipes have Asian flavors. But Recipes from the Root Cellar takes you around the world of flavors with offerings as culturally diverse as Japanese-Style Greens with Tofu, a Syrian rice-and-lentil classic called Mujdhara, Hot German Potato Salad with Sauerkraut, and a classic Jewish deli-style Borscht.

I know Andrea Chesman and I have met Deborah Krasner and can say that as different as these women are, they both have excellent tastes in food and are able to write recipes that are easy for the home cook to follow with success. While these recipes are perfect for Vermont Localvores, what is really exciting is that they are getting into the hands of cooks around the country who might not be as comfortable with local meats and winter vegetables as those of us from the Green Mountain State.

As Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders points out in the forward to Krasner’s book, “the challenge we now face, in terms of food production, is to break up the dangerous concentration of ownership that exists in agriculture and the food industry, and do everything we can to protect and expand family-based organic and local food production.” Good Meat and Recipes from the Root Cellar both help do just that.

---

**How to Roast Winter Vegetables**

*Tips from Andrea Chesman that even the most experienced cooks will find helpful*

- Cut all of the vegetables to a uniform size. Andrea likes to cut everything to a ½ inch dice. The benefit of a smaller dice is that the vegetables will roast more evenly and get more caramelized, which is what makes them so good.
- Preheat the oven to 450 degrees (anything lower and you will just be baking the veggies).
- Oil the bottom of a large cookie sheet.
- Toss the cut-up veggies in oil. Do not season/salt at this point.
- Spread the vegetables on the cookie sheet in a single layer. DO NOT CROWD them or they will steam and not roast. If necessary use two cookie sheets.
- Roast for about 40 minutes stirring or shaking the pan occasionally for even cooking.
- Taste to see if they are done. If not, let them go for another 5 minutes.
- Remove from the oven and sprinkle with kosher salt.
- Andrea suggests using a generous amount of oil because it helps develop the carmelization. If the veggies are too oily after cooking, set them on paper towels to absorb some of the oil.
- Before sprinkling with salt you can squirt with some lemon juice to add freshness, or 10 minutes before removing from the oven drizzle with maple syrup and return to the oven to finish the roasting.
With the twin realities of Peak Oil and Petro-Dollar collapse unfolding around us, can Vermont move to re-localize our systems of finance, fuel, and food in the months and years ahead? 

MICHAEL HAYES
Everyone has heard horrible break-up stories: The ones where there was lots of screaming and crying and breaking of things. But for everyone who’s thrown their used-to-be-beloved’s clothing out the window and onto the front lawn as the passers-by stopped and stared, there’s been someone who’s been calm and collected and respectful. I personally have not met or been that person yet, but I hear that they’re out there somewhere. Point being, there are good break-ups, and then there are bad break-ups. When you think about it, secession isn’t so much different.

There’s a whole gamut of reasons that relationships end. Sometimes it’s you. Sometimes it’s me. And sometimes, it’s just not a good fit, and that’s when you tell them, “It’s not you—it’s me,” while what you really mean is, “I swear to god, if you refer to me as ‘the ball and chain’ just one more time, I will remove one of yours so fast you won’t even see it leaving. And then I’m leaving.” Just as when you’re in a relationship and your significant other orders for you because you’re running a little late for your date, other people don’t always know what truly is best for you. There’s always someone with that annoying nut allergy whose boyfriend can never remember about it, and nothing says “the mood is dead” like an unplanned trip to the emergency room when you’re red and swollen.

Kind of like when the U.S. economy has tanked and oil prices are yet still on the rise. Kind of like when U.S. public schools are crumbling around teachers’ pay and employment cuts, yet society’s most affluent are still not digging deep for their taxes. As a nation, we’re not doing so hot. When the pay grades of the people responsible for our children’s educations are being sacrificed and streetlights are being shut off to save money, it starts to make you wonder what the next thing to go dark will be. Is the mood dead yet? Have you been sufficiently turned off?

Sustaining something, be it a relationship between two people or a union of 50 vastly different states, is no easy task. What one person, or one state, needs is different from what another desires. Vermont sleeps next to New Hampshire every night, and while we’re one of the most politically liberal states New Hampshire is as politically conservative as they come. Unlikely bedfellows, yes; and yet the orders coming from the head marriage counselor (the U.S. Government) expect that they’ll be treated not just as equals, but as one cohesive unit.
another hundred years without getting fed up or growing out of that relationship?

Don’t get me wrong; no break-up is easy. (If it is easy, maybe you should examine the reasons you were in that relationship in the first place.) It’s going to be awkward running into the other person you used to be part of a union with. After all, you have a long and intimate history together. But that doesn’t mean things need to get nasty. Grace under pressure has always been the best defense. You will refrain from getting defensive unless first provoked.

This is your basic human rights treaty:

- There will be the transfer of rights, obligations, property, and faith;

You now retain the right to be involved with whomsoever you want;

You are no longer obligated to associate with your ex’s weight-lifting, protein-drinking, beer can-crushing “bros,” or with other nations which you do not consider to have your best interests at heart.

You can return everything he left at your place – either back to him or maybe to the local Goodwill.

You will not falsely carry on hope like the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1991 to 1992. Maybe right now just isn’t your time to be in relationship. Maybe, instead, you’re going to have to focus on yourself, and your other, non-unified relationships.

You will get to realize that you, on your own, as a single, perhaps solitary unit, are stronger than any other governing power or couple. You are a lean, mean, self-sufficient machine. Learn to love yourself for how strong you are, and how optimistic, and at the same time, how fragile you can be. And realize that there are people out there who will love and support you for your hopes and your dreams and for what you deserve.

That’s what we need to realize: Vermont is a state made up of the sort of people who were strong, independent, and clear-headed enough to govern themselves from 1777 to 1791. For 14 years our state carried on a singular relationship with itself during the Revolutionary War, and if that’s not a commitment and testimony to self-sufficiency, I don’t know what is.

What happens now, as Vermont is realizing that its environmental concerns and desire to preserve our unique and sought-after way of life conflict with the develop-at-any-cost mentality of the rest of the country? If your spouse overspends, when do you decide to take away the joint-account checkbook and open a solo one? Can you even make that decision while you’re still in a relationship? Who gets to decide where to draw the line and call for the stop of the runaway train – the passengers, or the conductor? As a wise man (otherwise known as my father,) once told me, “It takes two people to be in a relationship, but only one to end it.” Does Vermont have it in her to be that fabled classy one, and politely and respectfully ask for her dissolution from the union?

International or national relations; interpersonal relations... It’s really just one principle, whether it’s politics or your love life we’re talking about. Seceding or breaking up is just getting the hell out, dignity intact, before it gets any worse and you find yourself strangling your spouse, strangled by them, or strangled by the rest of the nation.

Who gets to decide where to draw the line and call for the stop of the runaway train—the passengers, or the conductor?
A few years ago I began my own small-scale hoarding project. My thinking went like this: “I will hoard now to give myself a sense of security that I am safe in the face of the unknown future. I will prepare myself for possible emergencies by buying large quantities of things that seem like they may be scarce later on.” I was scared, and my hoarding was haphazard at best, and frankly, lazy at worst. The goal was not resiliency but a futile attempt to curb fear in the moment.

What I wasn’t able to be present with was this: I can’t predict the future. I don’t know what will unfold. Eventually I’ll die. I couldn’t look right at this because it was too bloody scary. It seems we humans, who have the capacity for hindsight (and, if we are lucky, foresight), don’t have much capacity for the insight that our future is fundamentally unknown. Nassim Nicholas Taleb writes in his book, The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable:

“But we act as if we are able to predict historical events, or, even worse, as if we are able to change the course of history. We produce thirty-year projections of Social Security deficits and oil prices without realizing we cannot even predict these for next summer – our cumulative prediction errors for political and economic events are so monstrous that every time I look at the empirical record I have to pinch myself to verify that I am not dreaming. What is surprising is not the magnitude of our forecast errors, but our absence of awareness of it.”

For a number of years I taught a course in Critical Thinking at Woodbury College in Montpelier. The course was designed to teach basic critical-thinking skills, from making clear observations to being able to identify facts, assumptions, and opinions. When we worked with the subject of facts the students had to answer the question, “What is one fact you are certain will always be true?” Two of the most common answers I received were not “Water will be wet” or “The sky will be blue,” but the following: “There will always be a president of the United States” and “The USA will always exist.”

Laugh/cry; I could never decide. My point is not to go into the pervasiveness of blind belief in the right and might of the state, but to say that all of us often mistake our beliefs for facts, particularly when our beliefs correlate with a firmly held emotional stance.

My job as a teacher was to plant the seeds of uncertainty in my students. Students often began the class with a tight construction of beliefs they took to be facts with a capital F: indisputable truths. Anything that fell outside of their worldview was dismissed as irrelevant. Successful students would leave the class in a complete muddle, but with new curiosity about the world. Everything was in question, everything was uncertain. Reliability no longer meant certainty. It just meant “apparently likely until new information disproves it,” which it might at any moment. Less successful students just left pissed off.

What we are in fact preparing for is uncertainty – a future we can’t predict. We are not accepting Perhaps Collapse: The Hopelessness of Hoarding

Jasmine Lamb

We often mistake our beliefs for facts, particularly when our beliefs correlate with a firmly held emotional stance.
the premise that what we have today will be there tomorrow, that it is inevitable that the United States will always exist, or that we know how things will unfold in our own personal life. It will not. We do not. It is as simple as that.

Back to my own hoarding: Maybe if I’d been less gripped by fears I may (or may not) have been able to see that my living situation (renting, chronic health issues, part-time seasonal work) wasn’t necessarily stable or long-term. Maybe if I’d seen this more clearly my risk-management plan would have been to divest myself of as much stuff as possible, making it easier to move quickly and cheaply if necessary, saving my resources for perishable needs and not accumulating a lot of physical objects. Instead I’m now paying $40 a month to store a lot of mason jars, light bulbs, and sponges. You know what you can do with a mason jar, light bulb, and a sponge don’t you?

By the time it became clear that my living situation wasn’t long-term and I needed to move, I’d accumulated all sorts of potentially useful objects: piles of matches, extra underwear, lots of shoes, pillowcases, candles, and enough milky oats tincture to calm the nerves of a lot of us for a very long time.

The truth is, we are not safe in the face of the unknown future. We are unsafe; unexpected things will happen. From this premise, we might consider, are there any actions I can take now to better prepare for the inevitable unknown that awaits me? Then the idea of emergency preparedness, food storage, alternative forms of energy, good relationships with neighbors, all become acts of resiliency even though we know in the end the unknown might take some form that we aren’t prepared for.

If we are hoarding so as to create a sense of psychological security we will look for evidence to confirm that our actions are going to protect and save us, even if they won’t. If we accept that we are fundamentally insecure and don’t know what will happen in the future we can become open and nimble in the moment to the information available to us.

The more we can lie down with these two unlikely bedfellows – hopelessness and preparedness – the better we will sleep and the more awake we will be. I’m not talking about the hopelessness that leads to resignation and depression, but the one that wakes us up to the joy of being alive in this very moment, not having a clue what the next moment will bring, yet savoring this one anyway.
A few weeks ago I was invited by something called the John Randolph Club to give a talk at one of their annual meetings.

I did a little research on the club and found out that it was essentially a project of the people at Chronicles magazine, what I might call a sort of paleo-conservative organ for the kind of people who despise liberals and their big-government political correctness and despise as well the neo-conservatives and their big-government imperialism. So I fit right in there, mostly, and have been happy to have them publish various pieces of mine from time to time. And the club, I learned, had been going on for 18 years, meeting at various cities around the country for a long weekend of oratory, disputation, and conviviality. I figured I'd fit in there, too.

As for John Randolph, I did a little research on him as well, and found that he served in Congress from Virginia for nearly 30 years, from 1799 to 1833, well-known for, yes, oratory, disputation, and conviviality. Just my kind of man. And a Jeffersonian at heart who broke with TJ in his second term when Jefferson became a nationalist centralizer and went and bought up the Louisiana Purchase, among other things. Randolph became the leader of a Congressional bloc called the Quids who were essentially anti-Federalists and champions of states rights. Again, my kind of man.

So I went to the club and gave a talk on John Randolph. Went something like this:

John Randolph – Randolph of Roanoke, the name of his plantation – was an unusual man. He was, though sober enough on the floor of Congress where he was a much admired, and feared, orator for more than 30 years, a heavy drinker after hours. He was so eccentric as to be regarded by more than one of his colleagues as half-mad; but then, that might be explained by the fact that a childhood disease had left him impotent, he never married nor sought the company of women, his face was completely hairless, and he had a high, kind of squeaky voice. Largely self-educated, he was nonetheless very widely read in several languages and had a brilliant mind, and when he named his favorite horse “Radical” it was surely not political but because he knew the Latin radicals meant rooted, grounded – characteristics he much treasured in himself and his Southern plantation culture.

I focus on Randolph today because I believe his wisdom of two centuries ago, surprisingly, has a good deal of relevance to the condition of our nation in these parlous times. For example, when he looked at the America of 1806, into Thomas Jefferson’s second and disastrous term as president, he might be describing today: “Everything and everybody seem to be jumbled out of place, except a few men steeped in supine indifference, whilst meddling fools and designing knaves are governing the country.” George Will could not have put it better.

Or this: “Change? Change, sir, is not progress… Resist the lust of innovation. Never, without the strongest necessity, disturb that which is at rest.”

But the most important of Randolph’s ideas and passions, and the one that resonates most in our time, was for the fundamental cause of states’ rights. He was in many ways an anti-Federalist, despite serving in the federal Congress for three decades, for he saw in the growth and centralization of the government a threat to the power of the states, and only that power, he knew, could check the progression toward the tyranny inherent in government. In the great debate on what was called “internal improvements” – that was the reading of the commerce clause, regulating commerce among the separate states to mean that the government could build and control such things as the roads and canals between them – Randolph was outraged:

“Never was greater violence done to the English language than by the construction that, under the power to prescribe the way in which commerce shall be carried on, we have the right to construct the way on which it is to be carried. Are gentlemen aware of the colossal power they are giving to the General Government?” As it turns out, they were, and they did.

Hence, Randolph was eventually to come out, reluctantly, in favor of nullification – the penultimate expression of states’ rights. That, of course, was a theory enunciated by both Jefferson and Calhoun in the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions of 1798; in Jefferson’s words, “The states, being sovereign and independent, have the unquestionable right to judge of [the Constitution’s] infraction; and that a nullification by those sovereignties, of all unauthorized acts done under colour of that instrument, is the rightful remedy.” Randolph was always a proponent of the Principles of 1798. As he once put it: “In practice, and in fact too, Virginia has been . . . for more than 30 years, the sole counterpoise and check on the usurpations of the Federal Government, so far as they have been checked at all… And it is because I am unwilling to give up this check, or to diminish its force, that I am unwilling to pull down the edifice of our State Government from the garret to the cellar.”

But, as it comes to all who deal in nullification, there came the time when there arose the shadow of the ultimate expression of states’ rights: secession. Randolph began what he regarded as the disasteful acceptance of this option when debating the tariff law of 1824 that would put an enormous economic burden particularly on the agricultural states of the South.

“Should this bill pass,” he declared, “one more measure only requires to be consummated” – Randolph was speaking here of confiscatory taxation – “and then we south of Mason and Dixon’s line . . . have to make up our own minds to perish like so many mice in a receiver of mephitic gas . . . or we must resort to the measures which we first opposed to British aggressions and usurpations” – the secession war of 1776 on – “to maintain that independence which the valor of our fathers acquired, but which is every day sliding from under our feet.” And then – and this on the very floor of the House of Representatives – “Sir, this is a state of things that cannot last. If it shall continue with accumulated pressure, we must oppose to it – associations, and every other means short of actual insurrection… We shall keep on the windward side of treason – but we must combine to resist, and that effectually, these encroachments, or the little upon which we now barely subsist will be taken from us.”

Secession, though a desperate remedy, was a “right undeniable”: “Self-defense is the first law of nature. You drive us into it.”

And as he put it on a later occasion toward the end of his life, in a resolution passed in his home state still resisting federal encroachment, Virginia was a sovereign state “which had but delegated the exercise of certain powers” to the federal government, and she retained the right to secede, “whenever she shall find the benefit of union exceeded by its evils.”

States as the agencies of resistance

John Randolph died in 1824 without having to move to the extremity of secession, but having left behind a long career in defense of that right, too, among the rights of the sovereign states. As we know, it was not until 36 years later that some states were forced to that extremity, but when that time came it was upon the assertion of rights that Randolph had upheld in circumstances very similar – rights, indeed, that are every bit as just and justifiable today, some 186 years later, because the undeclared and unjust war that ended a confederation based upon them in 1865 did not evaporate or eliminate those basic, inherent rights, whatever it may have done to destroy those who then proclaimed them.

Which brings me down to the present, and a consideration of what states’ rights would mean in a contemporary context.

There is more interest in this subject today than at any time since the concept was misused in defense of segregation 50 years ago, and this time around the cause has no less a shining aura to it than constitutionalism and sovereignty and liberty.
The impetus behind it, as it always has been, is excessive federal authority, but it is compounded in ways not seen in the past because that authority over the past half-century under both parties and all presidents was and is today far more intrusive and extensive than it has ever been, operating at a greater geographical reach and economic power than we have ever known, and intruding itself in more areas of life, upon more people, in more places, than it has ever done. What is more, this flagrant authority has two inherent and irreparable flaws that make it unsurpassably noxious and oppressive: one, it is so overreaching that it is incompetent and inefficient (the Katrinaization of everything), and two, it is so corrupt that it is clandestine and uncontrollable (the Obamafication of everything).

This, I say, is an assault that indeed we must confront, somehow, by creating, or energizing, places where serious resistance to it can take place. I am not at all sure that such a thing can be done, but I will say that this resistance is the only sane, intelligent, moral, and practical choice. I do not speak of hopeful or winnable, but of necessary and possible.

And I will tell you that after long study of this problem, I believe the only agency, the only locus, for that struggle is to be found in the individual American states. That is because they have four criteria that make them fit locations for resistance. First, they mostly pass the Goldilocks test; they are large enough to have serious economic and political clout, yet small enough to be amenable to public influence and persuasion. Second, states are coherent units that we don’t have to invent, with machinery and systems already in place that are well-known and manipulable, familiar to the populace. Third, states generally have underlying cultures of identity and loyalty and attachment, occasionally of affection and allegiance, a field on which citizens can be energized and motivated.

Fourth, states have a long tradition, if not always exercised, of states’ rights, including the well-known and well-defined concepts of nullification and secession, that can make them the most effective units for resistance to federal domination.

Already there is a growing movement among the states for stances that are very close to nullification. For example, the REAL ID Act was passed in 2005, trying to force states to issue new ID cards for their citizens, and to date 25 states have voted against compliance, while 25 others have just plain refused to follow it. It is still on the books, but it is dead. In addition, 35 states have introduced legislation making some possession of marijuana legal, in defiance of federal law, and it has actually passed in 13 of them. Thirty states have considered laws asserting their right to have the manufacture and sales of guns wholly within their borders free of any federal regulation or restriction, and eight of them have passed them, even though the federal firearms agency has declared them inoperable.

Finally 35 states have introduced laws or amendments that would prohibit any federal health care law from having effect within their borders, and it has become a law in seven of them – no more-blantant nose-thumbing at federal jurisdiction imaginable.

What all this says is that there is strong evidence that the states are the places where already there is some movement toward the assertion of rights that might provide the kind of resistance to the federal government that would succeed in advancing the cause of liberty.

And there is one more indication that something is brewing on the state level. It is not yet what could be called a full-scale movement, but it is reckoned that in this past year there has been more talk, and advocacy, about the “s” word – secession – than at any time since 1865. As the director of the Middlebury Institute, I have been watching the emergence of serious consideration of advancing the cause of peaceful secession over the past six years, and today it can be said that there are legitimate independence groups in at least 15 states (including South Carolina, where there are two) and there is talk, learned and earnest talk, about secession at approximately 50 websites and blogspots every day. And they are not from kooks, by any means; the authors may be, for the moment, fringe, but they are intelligent people of a great many ages and walks of life, trying to deal forthrightly with a serious strategy that seems increasingly popular and increasingly realistic.

So there is the case. The locus for resistance, if there is to be resistance, would most likely be that unit that already exists, that has familiarity and allegiance across the American public, that has always been a bedrock reality of American politics even when it was most misused, and that possesses known and hallowed weapons of assertion and independence in nullification and secession. As John Randolph was to say: “This [Federal] Government is the breath of the nostrils of the states. Gentlemen may say what they please of the preamble to the Constitution, but this Constitution is not the work of the amalgamated population of the then-existing confederacy, but the offspring of the States. And it is the power of the States to extinguish this government at a blow. They have only to refuse to choose members for the other body” – the Senate – “or refuse to send electors for the President and Vice President, and the thing is done!”

So let them hear that in the corridors of Congress; let them heed that in the chambers of the White House and the bureaucracy beyond; let them know that in the pressrooms and studios of the running-dog media: The government is the offspring of the states, and it is the states that have the power, should they awaken to it as we may hope, to assert their individual sovereignty against that overarching gattungian disguised as Uncle Sam.
IMAGINE A FREE VT!
VT INDEPENDENCE PARTY

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29
6PM-MIDNIGHT
CELEBRATE VERMONT’S INDEPENDENT SPIRIT!
$5 SUGGESTED COVER
PROCEEDS GO TO FILMMAKERS

FILM! DIRECTOR’S SCREENING
OF “GREEN-BLOODED” TEASER
WITH PUBLIC Q & A

LIVE MUSIC! WITH THE “PHINEAS
GAGE PROJECT” IN THE LOUNGE

DANCING! WITH SUGAR SHACK

THEATER • CAFÉ • FULL BAR • SODA FOUNTAIN • WIFI LOUNGE
802.449.8884 • 48 CARROLL ROAD • WATERVILLE, VT. OFF ROUTE 100. OPEN THUR-SAT. 5PM-1AM. WWW.BIGPICTURETHEATER.COM

MASTER YOUR FUTURE
Learn to guide others through difficult situations.

The Champlain College Online Masters in Mediation & Applied Conflict Studies—a powerful program that propels careers and changes lives.

As a student in the program, you’ll develop and refine a complete set of conflict engagement and resolution skills through face-to-face practice combined with a strong theoretical foundation. This innovative program blends brief on-campus residency sessions with online learning and practical application in your home community.

When your degree is completed, you will have the skills, knowledge and experience you need to become a distinguished leader in the mediation field.

To learn more: go.champlain.edu/msm

Attend the upcoming online info session on this program
Call (866) 282-7259
Or RSVP online at go.champlain.edu/msm-info

Civil and Environmental Engineering Services
Serving Vermont since 2000

- Land use planning and permitting
- Water/waste water (septic) design
- ACT 250/248 permitting
- FEMA flood plain analysis
- Roadway, driveway, parking lot and multi-use path design and permitting
- Underground/above ground storage tank management (design, permitting, installation, and closure)
- Stormwater management
- Site contamination, investigation, and remediation
- ASTM Phase I/II Site Assessments

For more information, contact Bill Wilcox
(802) 496-6747 • bwilcox@wilcoxandbarton.com

Wilcox & Barton, Inc.
Environmental and Engineering Services
1115 RT 100B, Suite 200
Moretown, VT 05660
www.wilcoxandbarton.com
WITHOUT ENVIRONMENTAL CAUSES, MUSICIANS WON’T HAVE SOCIALLY-CHARGED ANECDOTES TO SHARE DURING DINNER PARTIES.

Join Your Vermont Neighbors Already Working to "Keep The Earth In Business" and take $100 off of an annual 1/4 page advert in Vermont Commons news journal.

Artisan Engineering
Kurt Budliger Photography
NativeEnergy, LLC
The Brown Buffalo
Turtle Fur Group
WaterRock Communications

HELP ROCK STARS SAVE THE PLANET.
Introducing 1% For The Planet: The Music Vol. 1, featuring Jack Johnson, Mason Jennings, Jackson Browne, and more. All proceeds benefit 1%’s continued efforts to make the planet a more beautiful place.
Visit music.onepercentfortheplanet.org to listen to exclusive tracks.
Commons Cooperative Classifieds Network
JOIN THE VERMONT COMMONS COOPERATIVE - VISIT WWW.VTCOMMONS.ORG.
Our Vermont Commons Cooperative Model

Not-For-Profit
We see our news journal as a nonprofit “statewide multimedia coffeehouse,” not as a commercially-run for-profit business. In an era of corporate consolidation and the gutting of the print news business, we are providing an essential public service for the citizens of Vermont.

Place/Commons-Based
We are focused on the goings-on of a single place – Vermont – and its relationship with the rest of the world, with a specific focus on the idea of “the Commons.” (See Peter Barnes’ book Capitalism 3.0: A Guide to Reclaiming the Commons for an introduction.)

Civically-Minded and Solutions-Oriented
We seek out writers and ask them to submit their work as unpaid citizen journalists, chronicling solutions-oriented work being done by Vermonters across the state.

Fiercely Subjective/Non-Partisan
We make no pretense to “Objectivity,” preferring instead to model ourselves after 19th century republican newspapers in the then new U.S. republic. We have a definite point of view. But we balance this with a non-partisan approach, seeing ourselves as a “big tent” for a variety of voices from a variety of political perspectives – liberal, conservative, progressive, libertarian, and decentralist/mutualist.

Collaboratively-Funded
As a not-for-profit, we rely on funding from multiple sources, including generous individuals, subscriptions, and advertising from Vermont-based businesses and nonprofits.

Join the Vermont Commons Cooperative!

An annual $100 co-op membership earns you:

- A “Freedom and Unity” 50 Clover silver token (one ounce of .999 fine silver), featuring the Vermont independence flag on the front, and the likeness of Vermont homesteader and political activist Scott Nearing on the back.
- A one year subscription (6 issues) to Vermont Commons: Voices of Independence news journal.
- A Vermont Republic commemorative passport, featuring an 18th century woodcut image of an original Vermont republic coin on the front, and the Vermont independence flag on the back.
- A FREE 100 character classified advertisement in each of six issues of Vermont Commons: Voices of Independence news journal.
- An invitation to participate in our 2011 Commons Cooperative holiday meeting and party.

Help support Vermont independence.
Mail your $100 check made out to:

“Vermont Commons”
PO Box 1121
Waitsfield, Vermont 05673

Or, join our cooperative online in seconds at http://www.vtcommons.org

Free Vermont, and long live the UNtied States.
Dear Vermont Commons readers,

We write with exciting news for the new year!

First, Vermont Commons: Voices of Independence has now expanded our distribution from 200 to 350 locations all over Vermont. You can now find the Green Mountains’ only statewide independent multimedia news journal in just about every town in our once and future republic.

Second, we are partnering with Chelsea Green Publishing in 2011 to expand our bi-monthly print edition from 32 pages to 40 pages every single issue, to bring you even more Vermont voices exploring Vermont independence — all for the SAME annual subscription fee.

Third, we are excited to launch our Vermont Commons Cooperative for 2011. A charter $100 annual membership not only nets you a commemorative FREEDOM AND UNITY silver coin, and Vermont Republic Passport, but gives you a seat at our table as we begin to take our statewide independent multimedia news journal to a new level of democratic participation in the year ahead.

We hope that you’ll help support us to keep us going strong in 2011.

Please consider subscribing to Vermont Commons: Voices of Independence news journal, or joining our Vermont Commons Cooperative.

Do so in a matter of seconds at www.vtcommons.org, or mail your check to:

“Vermont Commons”
PO Box 1121
Waitsfield, Vermont 05673

As always, your donations, advertising partnerships, writing, photographs and good ideas are welcome.

Let’s celebrate our emerging vision of a more humane, sustainable, and democratic future for ourselves and our children.

Free Vermont, and long live the United States,

Rob

Rob Williams
Editor/Publisher - Vermont Commons: Voices of Independence
279.3364 (mobile) / editor@vtcommons.org