The Nuclear Reality: 
Facing it Squarely

Ben Falk

“The earth belongs to the living; no man may by natural right oblige the land he owns or occupies to debts greater than those that may be paid during his own lifetime.”
—Thomas Jefferson, 1789

“I am become death, destroyer of worlds.”
—Robert Oppenheimer recalling a line from the Bhagavad-Gita upon witnessing the first test of the atomic bomb

“Intergenerational remote tyranny: the idea that one generation might pollute the earth and destroy the ability of future generations to celebrate its abundance.”
—Bill McDonough

A bad case: Chernobyl
Twenty-five years ago, on April 27, 1986, engineers at a nuclear power plant in Sweden began to detect high levels of radiation on staff clothing. Within days the international community traced the source of this radiation to the Chernobyl-1 power plant in the Ukraine, 1,100 kilometers away. We will never know how long the Soviets were attempting to cover-up the incident. On the morning of April 26, the Soviets had lost control of the Chernobyl reactor, and after half a day of cooling attempts the reactor exploded multiple times. Within six days an area 600 kilometers wide in southwestern Asia and Eastern Europe

As our spring 2011 issue was going to press, the Entergy Corporation of Louisiana, which operates the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant in Vernon, announced that it was issuing a lawsuit against the State of Vermont, and took out full-page “advertisements” in nine Vermont newspapers explaining the corporation’s position. Our response to Entergy Corporation CEO J. Wayne Leonard’s letter can be found on page 40 of this issue. Visit our website at www.vtcommons.org for a helpful historical timeline of Vermont Yankee.

Sovereignty and the Money Problem: 
A New Beginning

Charles Eisenstein

Consult the following Vermont organizations for more information about their complimentary currency programs.

www.reachvt.org
www.vtfarmstand.org
www.orexchange.org

Also: Search the Vermont Commons website at www.vtcommons.org for economic, financial and local currency features written by Amy Kirshner, Hazel Henderson, Chris Martenson, Adrian Kuzminski, Gary Flomenhof, Jim Hogue, and others.

In the last several decades many independence movements around the world have been successful and the number of sovereign nations has vastly increased. Have these movements really achieved what they wanted? Or is the goal of political independence a kind of escape valve for aspirations that seek something deeper, something more substantial, than the symbols and trappings of the sovereign state? After all, many nations today find themselves to be sovereign in name only, their actions constrained by global politics and economics. One of the most potent constraints on a nation’s freedom to act is the global money system. In the continued on page 9

ON THE WEB
• Starve the Beast! Why We Need State Banks (Jim Hogue)
• Tea Party Billionaires: The Movie (Rob Williams)
• No-Fly Zones: Keep Your Eye on the Pea (Marc Estrin)
• Vermont Yankee: A Nuclear Timeline (Chronology)
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Hokusai’s ‘The Great Wave’; Woodblock; 1820

Hokusai's 'The Great Wave': Woodblock; 1820
If we in Vermont want to stop violence against women, we must stop war, training for war, and, ultimately, paying for war. That’s why Vermont women are interested in the Vermont independence movement. Our taxes would not go for war. But is Vermont the best-prepared state to lead the peaceful dissolution of the United States of Empire? Vermont’s history reveals a culture and community rooted in an early spirit of tolerance and cooperation. Vermont is a small state with a natural hefty “green” character. Fairness through compromise (“Freedom and Unity” is our state motto) has a down-to-earth appeal to Vermonters who take pride in common sense. But modern Vermont society and politics have been forced to conform to federal rules, supplanting decentralized power in favor of the federal. As a result, our Vermont politicians find themselves opposed to decentralization more often than not. Vermonters keep consuming the products made by child labor, paying taxes that fund torture and war, investing in Wall Street companies and pension funds, and relying on an aging nuclear reactor and fossil fuels.

And violence, particularly violence against women, remains a very real problem. Let’s consider this difficult issue at home, here in Vermont. Three violent murders of women and an assault have taken place in the Burlington area in recent years.

• March 9, 2005: Laura Winterbottom raped and murdered by Gerald Montgomery, 35.

• October 7, 2006: UVM student Michelle Gardner-Quinn raped and murdered by 36-year-old Brian Rooney.

• October 19, 2010: artist Kathleen Smith allegedly tortured and killed by Jose Pazos, 45.

• And, finally, this winter, February 29, 2011: Margaret Rowlands, 23, assaulted at 4 a.m. in her bedroom, and almost killed by her former boyfriend, Martin Morales, 21.

These murders have an impact on those of us who survive, even those of us who have studied friendly relationships with men. There is a fear that underlies the surface, among some men, there is a hostility toward – indeed, even a war against – women. Although the violence in the four cases above was premeditated, the aggressors made little serious effort to hide their tracks, and all were apprehended within weeks.

What makes these men think they have permission to control and dominate women? To own us, instead of partner with us? Is it “just” testosterone? What have some of the grieving friends of these murdered women done with their sadness and rage?

The Laura Winterbottom Fund raises money for a variety of projects, including the “Women Helping battered Women” eight-week program to help elementary-school kids affected by domestic violence figure out how to deal with it, as well as a week-long retreat for victims of sexual violence. These are essential services, but will they stop violence against women?

Two of us on the Vermont Commons editorial continued on page 7
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. Be sure to include your contact information (name, address, telephone, and e-mail) for verification purposes.

Letter to the Editor

"REFORM" UNDERMINING THE FOUNDATION OF VERMONT'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Editor, Vermont Commons:
The Healthcare Reform package currently moving through the legislative process in Vermont does not explicitly describe the funding mechanism for the system as envisioned post-overhaul. The closest description of what the funding mechanism would be comes from the Hsiao report. Hsiao states that in the case of any of the proposed benefit packages, the funding of the program and the payment protocol for services would be essentially the same across all options. It is imperative that Vermonters and our elected representatives look objectively at the potential effects of changing the funding of health insurance and the payments for medical care.

The proposed funding mechanism would impose a 14.5-percent payroll tax on Vermont incomes. Incomes from 80 percent of the federal poverty level up to $120,000 per year would be subject to the tax. In his open letter to the Legislature (Single Payer; Many Sweatshops, Vermont Tiger), Cairn Cross succinctly outlines the effect of this payroll tax on Vermont businesses. Essentially, anyone earning more than $55,000 a year would be better off financially by living and working outside of Vermont. For this portion of the population, the healthcare payroll tax is greater than the benefit in healthcare—expense savings that the wage earner would see. The effect is to drive higher-income wage earners and jobs out of Vermont. Alternatively, lower-paying jobs would be attracted to Vermont because the state would be subsidizing the healthcare expenses of these workers. The net effect is high-paying jobs out, low-paying jobs in, and a degradation of the tax base that this taxpayer-financed healthcare system is based on.

The Hsiao blueprint’s payment mechanism to healthcare providers is similarly ignorant in regard to basic economic principles and human nature. Laudably, the report calls for an increase in payments to primary care physicians who, like all physicians in Vermont, have incomes near the bottom for their specialty on a national basis. On the other hand, specialists are to be paid for all

continued on page 31
A s evidence of Vermont’s strong anti-war base, back in 2003 the entire Vermont Congressional delegation voted against the resolution authorizing the war in Iraq. Nearly eight years later, it’s hard to believe that Senator Bernie Sanders, the darling of the left, Senator Patrick Leahy, U.S. Representative Peter Welch, and Progressive Party Burlington Mayor Bob Kiss are all palling around with Lockheed Martin, the world’s largest “defense” contractor.

Sanders, Kiss, and University of Vermont President Daniel Fogel are actively encoura- ging the U.S. government-owned Sandia National Laboratories to open a satellite laboratory in Vermont. Sandia, whose historical origins can be traced back to the Manhattan Project in World War II, designs, builds, and tests weapons of mass destruction. The Vermont laboratory envisaged by Sanders and Fogel would not be involved with nuclear weapons, but rather would be engaged in projects related to energy efficiency, renewable energy, and electric grids. Sandia, interestingly enough, is operated under contract by Lockheed Martin. UVM has already been awarded a $1 million contract by the U.S. Energy Department as a down payment towards the “research partnership” between the University and Sandia.

Without any sense of irony whatsoever, Sanders now refers to himself as “the most progres- sive member of the U.S. Senate.” If that is actu- ally true, then we are all in dire straits. Sanders’ Vermont constituents have shown little or no concern for the hypocrisy underlying his support for the Sandia project. It’s all about jobs.

Although Sanders, Leahy, and Welch pretend to be political liberals, they are, in fact, mind- less pawns of the military-industrial-Congres- sional complex marching to the beat of the war drums of Wall Street, Corporate America, the Pentagon, and the Israeli military machine. They support: (1) most all funding for the illegal wars for Israel, euphemistically referred to as “pilots,” can be deployed to Iran, North Korea, Syria, Libya, Russia, Venezuela, or any other country Uncle Sam has decided to demonize, and begin annihi- lating innocent citizens including women and children. Do peace-loving Vermonters want to be a part of something this grotesque?

Every new military contract awarded to a Vermont firm is announced by Senator Patrick Leahy. With each such announcement, Leahy always hyps the number of new jobs that will be created. No mention is ever made of the number of people who will be killed by Vermont-made instruments of death.

Vermont Adjutant General Michael Dubie has expressed the hope that the Vermont National Guard might evolve into a center for unmanned aircraft, otherwise known as drones. This would mean that Vermonters could become directly involved in killing civilians in Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Iran through the use of pilotless drones controlled by well-trained, high-tech, gutless assassins seated in air-conditioned comfort in front of sophisticated instrument panels at the Burlington International Airport. This form of neat, clean, precise, risk-free, sanitized, bloodless, desktop warfare could be waged by Vermonters who have never set foot on a battlefield or smelled the stench of death. Lockheed Martin is a major player in the drone aircraft market. Neither Senator Sanders nor any of the other leaders of the Vermont Progressive Party have ever expressed any objections whatsoever to Vermont becoming a drone aircraft center.

One of the most puzzling aspects of Vermont’s willingness to play along with the Pentagon’s insidious game has been the behavior of Mayor Bob Kiss. Kiss is a longstanding, anti-war liberal. Yet he recently signed a letter of agreement with Lockheed Martin calling for the development of a so-called “Carbon War Room” in Burlington to create market-based solutions for climate change problems. Why would Kiss get in bed with such a notorious warmonger? Was it to pave the way for the proposed Sandia Laboratory? Or was it some- thing else?

And in the midst of all of this the University of Vermont has seen fit to confer an honorary doctorate upon Major General Michael Dubie, an enthusiastic supporter of the F-35 as well as drone aircraft.

What’s really going on in the Green Mountain State? Why is so much attention being directed towards tiny Vermont by Lockheed Martin? Clues to the answer to this question may lie in Chicago and Ottawa.

Several years ago the giant aircraft manufac- turer Boeing moved its corporate headquarters from Seattle to Chicago. It soon developed close ties to the then-U.S. Senator Barack Obama and U.S. Representative Rahm Emanuel. When Obama was elected president, Emanuel was named White House chief of staff. Emanuel recently left the White House to become mayor of Chicago. He was replaced by William Daley, brother of outgoing Chicago Mayor Richard Daley. Most importantly of all, William Daley was a member of the board of directors of Boeing.

To the surprise of many insiders, a few weeks after Daley became chief of staff, the Pentagon awarded Boeing a $35 billion contract to produce 179 aerial refueling tankers. Most pundits had expected the contract to be awarded to the European Aeronautic Defense and Space Company, the maker of Airbus commercial jets, which was thought to have the superior proposal. Few would question the assertion that by moving to Chicago, Boeing bought itself a lot of political influence both on the local and national scene. Could this be what Lockheed Martin has in mind for Vermont? If Vermont is willing to sell its soul to the Empire, maybe other liberal states will follow suit.

Now let’s turn the clock back to the 1995 refer- endum in Canada where the issue of Quebec separatism was narrowly defeated. Since that time Ottawa has poured countless millions of loonies (the Canadian dollar) into Quebec, effec- tively buying off Quebec separatists.

Although its political impact within Vermont has been marginal, the Vermont independence movement is arguably the most high-profile secessionist movement in America. Its influence outside of Vermont has been much greater than has been the case within the state. Small though it might be, someone apparently perceived the Vermont independence movement to be a threat.

Is it possible that what the Lockheed Martin strategy is all about is little short of an attempt to buy off a state that was once considered to be the most left-wing state in the U.S. Empire, a state unconditionally committed to peace? By pouring millions of dollars into Vermont for defense-related projects, do the Pentagon and Lockheed Martin hope to put the quietus to the Vermont peace movement? If so, there is considerable evidence to suggest they have been successful.

The peace movement in Vermont is dead in the water. The Progressive Party is morally, intellec- tually, and spiritually bankrupt. It has not uttered a peep in response to the Lockheed Martin affair.

It is as though the Progressive Party in Vermont has morphed into the Vermont Pro-War Party, a party that welcomes both Democrats and Republicans who are sold on war. •
The Nuclear Reality, continued from page 1

was deposited with acute levels of cesium, strontium, barium, and other radioactive elements.

Until 2000 the Ukrainian government spent more than 5 percent of its GDP on caring for those affected by the event and in long-shot “clean up” attempts of the reactor site itself. Since then, government spending on the “accident” has been reduced because of lack of funds. International government donations have amounted to about $800 million, from which Bechtel Corporation was hired to attempt containment of the still-leaking, super-hot, former power plant with one of the largest movable objects ever made – a 200,000-ton structure with 40-inch solid steel walls. Engineers for Bechtel say that if everything goes as planned the structure will reduce continuous radiation release from the reactor site for a century, giving the Ukrainian government “hopefully enough time to figure out how to dispose of the thousands of tons of high level radioactive materials present.”

The soils within 40 kilometers to 100 kilometers (km) of the site, however, will remain lethally radioactive with lower-level fission byproducts like cesium, for at least hundreds of years.

Today, Pripyat a former city with a population of 50,000 human beings, is empty, and will likely remain empty for the rest of human history. It is illegal to live within a zone of 30 km from the former reactor; this is part of the official “Zone of Alienation” designated after the incident. This area, and likely zones beyond it, will continue to cause extreme levels of cancer, chromosomal aberrations, and bodily mutations in human beings for at least a thousand years. This area of once-fertile land is now banished from time. In Belarus, the Novinki asylum (http://tinyurl.com/4enccxr) cares for hundreds of children orphaned in the desperate aftermath of Chernobyl. Novinki is home to perhaps the most localized legacy of nuclear energy – the children of Chernobyl’s plant personnel and local residents, contorted versions of the human figure, some with bowling ball-sized protrusions from their heads and buttocks. One child’s brain was formed outside of his skull. Many have grotesque, swollen limbs, malformed jaws and foreheads. A horror-show of genetics. Some of them will surely reproduce, passing these genes into the future of humanity. Few of the children can walk; most lie about on the floor all day, many going through fits of horror and rage. Some gnaw on themselves and live bound in straitjackets.

Best case

Don’t be confused by the smoke and mirrors: nuclear catastrophe is not simply the result of “preventable mistakes.” It wouldn’t matter if the Dalai Lama were the head of the NRC and the executives of Entergy Nuclear, Inc., were not millionaires who have lied on record, but rather the world’s most revered saints. The issue is that the technology demands perfection, and humans are imperfect.

Indian Point, Fitzpatrick, Nine-Mile Point, Vermont Yankee, Seabrook, Pilgrim, and 98 other nuclear power plants in the United States contain the possibility, every day, of becoming a Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, or Fukushima Daiichi. Even worse, a nuclear plant could be the target of a terrorist attack. Yet, those are only the worst possibilities. The constant and certain one is what we know will unfold: Even if all operating nuclear power plants were shut down tomorrow, an intergenerational project the likes of which humanity has never attempted is just beginning, as our children, and their children and theirs, will struggle to guard each of these sites from leakage, terrorism, and weathering for thousands of years.

Nuclear technology is surely humanity’s most enduring legacy. What of our works will be pres-
To think we can manage a lethal material for hundreds of human generations successfully without error defines insanity.

up, against our will (polls show that nuclear energy has never been supported by more than 30 percent to 40 percent of citizens in any nation) for an impossible task. At best we will contain the radioactivity we’ve produced to as few areas as possible, we will close the reactors down immediately, and we will rapidly develop bioremediation techniques for sopping up, isolating, and sequestering radioactivity. Radiation, like heavy metals, cannot be diffused or broken down; it is elemental. We must deflect it, isolate it, bind it, and let it “cool” in sequestered locations, which only long spans of time can do. Humanity must now engage in a space-race-scale mission to preserve the functional capacity of human chromosomal and cellular activity in the face of an increasingly radioactive home planet.

A recurring pattern
In pursuit of war technologies we’ve dredged from the depths of this planet minerals that are incompatible with a healthy biosphere. We have then refined them into even more lethal forms. Then, in addition to making weapons of mass destruction from these, we’ve made an electricity-producing industry from them. Not surprisingly, this parallels the way industrial agriculture emerged from the chemical industry, employed for use in World War II. Nuclear energy is first and last a death-dealing technology developed for war, and promoted not by citizens but by industry leaders for great short-term profits, funded at all points in the process by the taxpayer.

The long-term consequences, however, will be felt by all. It will be difficult to explain to our grandkids why we did it, when no one forced us to. After all, as a notable physicist once remarked, “we already have the best atomic power plant possible; luckily it’s located 93 million miles away and is called the sun.”

Nuclear technology depends on confusion and complexity to be supported. It depends upon a deep disregard for history and refusal to think about the prospects of tomorrow. Its continuation demands that we ignore everything but the present moment, and even when facing that, do so with total indifference. Humanity has signed up for a 10,000-year impact plan, whether we like it or not. Our footprint on this planet now reaches forward into time further than our past stretches from the dawn of civilization.

We can choose to let this impact plummet us into the darkest age, or we can acknowledge it, show restraint, and make this the brightest era humanity has ever seen. That will require an about face, an acknowledgement of the limits of human cleverness, a new humility, and a fierce determination to pass onto our children a livable planet. The nuclear age will quickly determine humanity’s tenure on this small home on which we pass our fragile genes from one generation to the next. •
Editorial, continued from page 2

Cheryl Diersch and Robin Lloyd – are members of an international women’s organization that links up with women around the world: the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). We hear stories of violence from women from the Congo and India and Bosnia. In WILPF, we have been supporting the enforcement of a United Nations resolution, SCR 1325, passed unanimously by the Security Council in 2000. This resolution focuses on women, peace, and security, and asserts that women should be involved at every level in conflict resolution and the creation of human security.

Perhaps it seems paradoxical to want to disassociate ourselves from the U.S. Empire, while reaching out to work for the enforcement of a global document supporting women’s equality.

But we believe we must work within the old system, while dreaming of the new. The most powerful woman in the U.S. of Empire, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, supports SCR 1325, and is calling for the development of a National Action Plan. (Under UN rules, every nation has to develop a plan, and yet, after the 10 years that 1325 has been in existence, only 16 nations have done so. By the way, women have translated this document into 100 languages, more than any other UN document!) We would like women – and more men – to grab this bull by the horns and develop an Action Plan. What, for example, would a women’s budget look like? If spending was cut for war and training for war, then . . . Good heavens! We might get a tax refund! How could education be changed to promote a partnership ethic? If we mandate that corporations stop funding our mainstream media, would violent, and dehumanizing images of women diminish? We would hope to work with other groups with similar goals: The Vermont Worker’s Center is focusing on a similar project – developing a People’s Budget.

Perhaps it seems paradoxical to want to disassociate ourselves from the U.S. Empire, while reaching out to work for the enforcement of a global document supporting women’s equality. But we believe we must work within the old system, while dreaming of the new.

Unless you have completely ignored the Gulf oil spill, the Japanese nuclear meltdown disasters, and continual lies and radiation leaks from Vermont’s nuclear power plant, you are probably scared as hell of the age of “energy descent” that seems to have arrived. The pressures of overpopulation, overconsumption, peak oil, environmental catastrophe, nuclear meltdowns, financial meltdowns... all are bearing down on us emotionally, spiritually, and physically.

Many who dare to awaken from denial of these realities are likely find themselves depressed, scared, angry, and even hopeless, because we are unclear what we, as citizens, can do. How do we build lifeboats for sustainability and survival, since it’s clear that our “too big to fail” Titanic civilization is hitting icebergs and the captain is ignored the warnings?

Nuclear power is not affordable. It’s not safe to operate Vermont Yankee beyond its designed life span, and we just don’t need it.

I remain an optimist, because I’m aware of actual solutions to these questions, which I’ll explore in a two-part series starting with this article. The challenges ahead of us will rival anything we’ve seen before. Passion in the face of these challenges is not an option. I suggest that we look at these questions in two categories, with a focus on energy, since energy is the foundation of our economic and survival systems:

1. What should Vermont do in terms of statewide energy policy, and how do we mobilize populist pressure to confront the status quo?
2. What should we do as individuals to insulate ourselves from the age of energy descent?

First we need clear and accurate information.

What are our best energy options for a self-sufficient, sustainable future?

Nuclear power: Many apparently intelligent people still believe that nuclear power is “affordable” compared to other options. Okay, let's forget about the safety issues, for argument’s sake (although it’s insane to ignore the risks), and just look at the numbers, with Vermont Yankee as the example.

• The New England grid currently has a 30-percent surplus capacity in the winter and a 20-percent surplus capacity in the summer, according to 2011 reports from the New England Independent Systems Operator (NE ISO, the organization that manages all electricity generation/transmission in New England, sometimes called “the grid”). This does not include Canadian hydropower, which adds much more excess capacity to NE markets. Read the report for yourself at http://www.iso-ne.com/trans/cele/report/2010/2010_cel_report.pdf
• Vermont Yankee represents only 2 percent of the New England grid’s capacity, meaning if VY goes away, the NE grid still has at least an 18 percent surplus capacity in the summer, 28 percent surplus in the winter.
• VY has offered to supply only 15 percent of Vermont’s current energy needs (the rest would be sold to higher-priced NE markets like Massachusetts), at a wholesale rate that is a 50 percent increase over the current rates being charged, under the current re-licensure bid that was just approved the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission.
• Vermont utilities recently signed deals with Hydro-Quebec to supply more power to Vermont than VY would under the above offer, at a wholesale price slightly lower ($0.058) than the $0.065 wholesale price that Entergy recently offered Vermont.

Conclusion: there is absolutely no chance that closing down VY in 2012 will create any immediate increase in utility rates for Vermont.

Vermont has a contractual right to turn down Entergy’s re-licensure bid due to an agreement made in 2002, but Entergy is suing Vermont in federal court, claiming that the NRC has domain over this decision. The NRC granted VY a license extension in late March. Vermont’s Legislature, governor, and citizens are resoundingly against re-licensing. This may be the biggest “state’s rights” issue that Vermont will face in the coming year.

Will Vermont’s population stand up, Madison, Wisconsin-style, to make sure our governor and Legislature hold their ground on Vermont’s sovereignty? Examples comparing nuclear power to “alternative energy” — hydro and solar power:

Solar (PV): PV is one of the most expensive renewable energy sources out there, but distributed PV is a stronger investment than centralized nuclear power in terms of the cost/benefit. It would take less than 1 percent of Vermont’s land, or about 5,300 acres, devoted to PV (calculating, for domestic-supply purposes, 300 square feet of land for the average home), to generate 75 percent of Vermont’s total annual power demand. In this scenario Vermont would buy power from the NE ISO whenever the sun isn’t shining, and we’d sell excess PV power back to the grid whenever the panels are producing power.

At today’s PV prices, with no federal or state subsidies, it would take $12 billion invested in distributed PV to generate 75 percent of Vermont’s annual electricity needs for 30 plus years, with no additional fuel costs beyond minimal operation/maintenance factors.

The NRC granted VY a license extension in late March. This may be the biggest “state’s rights” issue that Vermont will face in the coming year.

If Vermont wanted to acquire a new nuclear plant to be built to replace Vermont Yankee’s capacity (which would cover about 75 percent of Vermont’s total power demand if Vermont got all of the plant’s capacity), that would cost $9 billion just to build the new plant, not including costs of storing spent fuel rods or decommissioning the site. Of course, ratepayers would then be paying retail power rates instead of getting free energy from their solar panels, to pay for the operation of the nuclear plant, including the cost of mining, refining, transporting, and then storing the spent fuel rods for hundreds of years.

Hydro-Power. It’s a little-known fact that a few years ago Vermont sold the rights to existing hydropower sites on the Deerfield and Connecticut rivers that total 580 megawatts of capacity. This is nearly equivalent to Vermont Yankee’s 650-megawatt capacity, and hydropower is actually cheaper than nuclear power by any measure.

These dams are currently not even connected to the Vermont power grid; all the power is sold to higher-priced markets in the Northeast. Vermont sold these hydropower rights to Trans Canada for $380 million. Vermont conceivably could buy these hydro sites back, and even if the price were three times that amount we could replace Vermont Yankee for less than 10 percent of what it would cost to build a new nuclear plant to replace VY.

Nuclear power is not affordable, it’s not safe to operate Vermont Yankee beyond its designed life span, and we just don’t need it. We each need to help educate our friends and neighbors about this, and get ready to mobilize massive civil disobedience if the federal NRC tries to override Vermont’s sovereign right to shut down Vermont Yankee.

Part II, in the Summer 2011 issue of Vermont Commons, will explore “Energy Lifeboats for Vermonters.”
Sovereignty, continued from page 1

Eurozone, for example, EMU rules dictate many economic and even social policies. Elsewhere, it is IMF conditions that do the dictating, or, in the case of large states with their own currencies, it is the bond markets. If a country implements policies that are perceived as unfriendly to investors, or as likely to reduce commodity exports, it is “punished” by capital flight, higher interest rates on its debt, runs on the currency, and so on. Like it or not, nations are forced to be more competitive: to cut wages and social spending, to orient toward commodity exports, to facilitate the exploitation of natural resources. No government, liberal or conservative, is immune to these pressures, which is one reason why liberal and conservative policies around the world have so converged as to become nearly indistinguishable. Even supposedly sovereign nations don’t enjoy true self-determination.

This should be food for thought for advocates of Vermont independence. Real political sovereignty requires economic sovereignty: local control over the exploitation and circulation of resources, along with a moderate degree of local self-sufficiency. Unfortunately, governments that defy international finance and seek to establish true economic sovereignty—for example, by protecting the domestic economy, limiting the exploitation of natural resources, and protecting workers and the environment—incur not only the above-mentioned economic punishments, but are labeled “leftist” and subjected to political pressure, too. First their politicians are bribed, directly or indirectly, to adopt more “growth-friendly” or “free market” policies. Then, the government finds itself facing foreign-funded “democratic” opposition, hostility from the corporate media, or even a military coup, funded “democratic” opposition, hostility from distant markets. Fortunately, the financial and political system that enforces this status quo is in crisis. Its dissolution offers new possibilities for creating true local self-determination.

Political sovereignty is largely meaningless if its economy remains a helpless appendage of the global financial system. Today nearly every place is a colony, importing finished products that it is helpless to produce itself, and devoting its raw materials, skills, and/or labor power to the needs of distant markets. Fortunately, the financial and political system that enforces this status quo is in crisis. Its dissolution offers new possibilities for creating true local self-determination.

Anyone hoping to launch a local currency in a modern economy faces a Catch-22. Local businesses won’t want to accept local currency unless they can use it to purchase labor, raw materials, or other inputs. For a local currency to thrive there must therefore be local producers who meet the needs of other local producers.

Local currencies encourage businesses to source products locally, and give them a competitive advantage against national companies that will not accept payments in local currency. Unlike dollars, which quickly get sucked away to corporate headquarters and Wall Street, local money stays local.

Conditions for local currencies

In theory at least, one of the most powerful ways to restore and protect local economy, and by extension some degree of political autonomy, is through local currency. Local currencies encourage businesses to source products locally, and give them a competitive advantage against national companies that will not accept payments in local currency. Unlike dollars, which quickly get sucked away to corporate headquarters and Wall Street, local money stays local. The more businesses that accept it, the more useful it becomes, and the more businesses will want to accept it. In theory, once it reaches critical mass it should be self-reinforcing. Activists and organizations such as the E.F. Schumacher Society have been promoting the idea of local currencies for decades now; information about its benefits is widely available on the web. Yet local currencies still occupy a marginal position in the economy. Most attempts at launching them founder within the first year or two. The reasons for their relative failure illuminate a future path toward authentic local self-determination.

In other words, to be successful, a local currency requires a functioning local economy, which is today a rarity because of the financial system that encompasses all. Without limits on capital flows, local producers are at the whim of global commodity prices. A restaurant might want to source food locally, but often the local farmer cannot compete with distant, subsidized mega-farms enjoying high efficiencies of scale and market leverage. In short, local economies can only develop if they are financially protected from global commodity markets—for example, through a local currency with limited convertibility. But a local currency cannot be successful in the absence of a local economy. Catch-22.

To exit this dilemma requires a purposive initiative to launch and sustain a local currency. Such an initiative will require a healthy dose of local activism and commitment, but the rewards will be great. The power of the local currency is in its concentration on the needs of local producers. It is a tool for political change, a bridge between political and economic sovereignty.
Sovereignty, continued from page 9

political decision to nurture local economy. Local currency is a key part of this effort, which must also include local credit mecha-
nisms, economic infrastructure, fiscal and tax policy, and so forth. It is particularly helpful if local currency is acceptable as legal tender for payment of taxes. (That is unheard of today; on the contrary, complementary currency trans-
actions are subject to sales and income taxes payable only in dollars, forcing people to oper-
ate in the national currency whether they want to or not.) The successful local currencies that proliferated in the 1930s were issued mostly by local governments themselves. The reaction of central governments was uniformly hostile—understandably, since currency issue has become a key prerogative, perhaps a defining preroga-
tive, of a sovereign state. Most local currencies were banned in short order.

When, as in some cities already, there is not even the money to pay the firefighters, it may not be long before we adopt Argentinian and 1930s-style experiments on a wide scale.

The other circumstance under which local currency use becomes widespread is during times of social turmoil, war, or the collapse of the national currency. Then all kinds of informal currencies spring up: cigarettes, vodka, gasoline, gold, and so forth. In normal times, however, only the national currency is widely used.

Today it is becoming increasingly apparent that normal times are ending. We are witness-
ing the slow-motion disintegration of the financial system that has dominated our world for the last 70 years. In the wake of its collapse and the accompanying social turmoil, opportunities will arise to implement new kinds of money systems, rebuild local economies, and reestablish local sovereign.

For a preview of how it might unfold, we can look to the Argentinian economic crisis of 2001-2002. Provincial governments ran out of pesos to pay employees and contractors, so they paid them in low-denomination bearer bonds instead (one-peso bonds, five-peso bonds, etc.). Businesses and their employees accepted them readily, even though nobody really expected the bonds would ever be redeemable for hard currency, because they could be used to pay provincial taxes and fees. Acceptability for payment of taxes enhanced the social perception of its value, and as with all money, value and the perception of value are identical. The curren-
cies circulated far beyond their region of issue. They revived economic activity, which had ground to a halt since, after all, people still had the capacity to produce goods and services that other people needed, lacking only the means to make exchanges. At the same time, Argentina’s government repudiated its foreign debt, tempo-
rarily cutting it off from imports and increasing the need for local self-reliance. At that point the IMF stepped in with emergency loans to induce the country to keep its debts on the books.

In 2009, the state of California came within a hair’s breadth of doing nearly the same thing. Faced with a budget crisis that rendered it unable to pay tax refunds and money owed to contrac-
tors, the state began issuing IOUs instead. Similar to bonds, these were to be redeem-
able for their face value plus interest at a later date, or they could be used to pay state taxes. The program was terminated after a month or so, as the state obtained short-term loans from banks. Although the IOUs were denominated in U.S. dollars, banks threatened not to redeem them, which would have made them into a sepa-
rate currency. The episode shows that there are forces just below the surface pushing toward a different money system. It can happen nearly overnight. Unthinkable in normal times (i.e., the normality of endless growth, which will never come again), local, government-issued currency could soon become common sense.

An environment of local stewardship

At present we are living, if no longer in normal times, at least in the inertia of the habits of those times. Accordingly, local currencies still face an uphill battle, languishing without govern-
ment support. Nonetheless, the efforts of local currency activists over the last 30 years have not been in vain. They have created a model—many models in fact—to be applied when the next crisis erupts and the unthinkable becomes common sense. Already, cities and states are on the verge of bankruptcy. When, as in some cities already, there is not even the money to pay the firefighters, it may not be long before we adopt Argentinian and 1930s-style experiments on a wide scale.

But this is only a beginning. We face today a multiplicity of converging crises, not just economic. Of particular relevance to local sover-
eignty are the energy crisis and the ecological crisis, which call us to reduce our dependence on long-distance transport, and to produce and consume in a way that respects local ecosys-
tems. In today’s money system, producers profit by exporting their costs onto the social and natural commons, using up the wealth that properly belongs to all. This includes the soil, the aquifers, the land, mineral resources, biologi-
cal diversity, and the capacity of air and water to absorb waste. While some of these forms of commonswealth, such as the CO2 commons, are global in nature, most are local or regional, and should therefore be held under local or regional stewardship. In the current money system, that is nearly impossible, even for sovereign nations. Pressure exerted by global finance and the commodity economy to convert every possible bit of social and natural capital into money is too great to resist.

That is likely to soon change. Our money system cannot exist without economic growth; without growth, wealth quickly concentrates in the hands of the few, and social tumult soon follows. Today, growth is reaching its limits as the commons is exhausted, and as human consciousness shifts toward a desire to protect and heal the earth. Local and bioregional governments will have a dual opportunity: to reclaim sovereignty over their economies, and stewardship over the natural commons under their jurisdiction.

These goals are not separate. Indeed, one way to regulate the use of the commons so that it is sustainable and socially beneficial is through currency. Local money backed by locally admin-
istered pollution allowances, Georgia land-use rights, mineral- leasing rights, and other items of the commons can shift the tax burden onto resources, creating an incentive to conserve and preventing the externalization of costs onto the environment and future generations. The details are beyond the scope of this article; suffice it to say that with monetary sovereignty, local governments can ensure that wealth, both natural and social, circulates locally to whatever extent it deems wise.

Ultimately, political sovereignty means very little if outside corporations can strip-mine a society’s natural and social capital—its resources, skills, and labor—and export them to global markets. Meaningful sovereignty is economic sovereignty. As the tide of economic globaliza-
tion peaks and reverses, we have the chance to regrow our social structures so that we become no longer mere inhabitants and exploiters of the cultural-biological regions in which we live, but of their organic extensions, their lovers, protec-
tors, and stewards. Isn’t that what we are really seeking, when we speak of sovereignty?

For a local currency to thrive, there must be local producers who meet the needs of other local producers.

The Valley Stage

Music Festival Present:

August 13, 2011 12:00 – 9:30 p.m.

Danny Barnes
Stone Cold Roosters,
Round Mountain, and String Fingers Band

www.valleystage.net
Bye Bye Miss American Empire
Where Wisdom Lies: Home and Homefolks

Bill Kauffman

The crimes and follies of the Bush-Cheney Administration boosted their fortunes on the left, secessionists admit, just as the statist lunges of Barack Obama energized independence sentiment on the right. But no matter which party lays claim to leviathan, the case for radical devolution loses none of its cogency. The problem with the United States is one of scale, and it cannot be solved simply by electing new or different or better people to public offices. As Donald Livingston says, “The public corporation known as the United States has simply grown too large for the purposes of self-government, in the same way that a committee of 300 people would be too large for the purposes of a committee. There needs to be a public debate on the out-of-scale character of the regime and what can be done about it.”

Decentralizing power, in addition to reducing this outsized scale of representation, would also have the virtue of localizing those coalition splitters known as “social issues.” Case in point:

At the national conference of secession organizations held in Burlington, Vermont, in November 2006, one of the Southern delegates calls abortion a heinous crime. I sit back to watch the fireworks – but the sparklers are doused in the fresh waters of federalism. There is general agreement on a mind-your-own-damn-business principle. If Marin County wants to serve joints with school lunches and Tupelo, Mississippi, wants the Ten Commandments in the classroom, well, that’s up to the people of Marin and Tupelo. Ain’t none of my business. Yours, either.

“I detest homosexuality,” says Donnie Kennedy over lunch in gay-friendly Burlington, but if other states – or nations – wish to grant marriage licenses to homosexual couples, he has no objection. (One suspects, however, that the independent South of Kennedy’s dream might well refurbish the closet, setting off, perhaps, a second Battle of New Orleans.)

Let Utah be Utah, and let San Francisco be San Francisco. The policy will drive busybodies mad with frustration, but for the rest of us, it just might be the beginning of tolerance.

There is no reason why this kind of hands-off mutuality requires secession—they didn’t use to call the U.S. system “federalism” for nothing—but the urge to intervene is so irresistible to noxious nannies and moralizing marplots that states and cities and towns have been deprived of the right to make their own laws, shaped by local circumstances, on such matters as the legality of marijuana and abortion and the proper way (if any) to define marriage. Does anyone really think
The average congressional district now contains 647,000 persons. How is anything like representative government possible on such an enormous and impersonal scale?

The wine flowed at the Burlington conference’s concluding banquet, and your author, I am afraid, drank freely of the vine. (It ought to have been, but was not, a Vermont vintage. But then, chain hotels tend not to pay attention to such things.)

Maybe the Burlington conference was a sideshow, an amusing tour of the more outré precincts of American politics. But I think it was a harbinger. The delegates ratified a “Burlington Declaration” that echoed the Declaration of Independence in asserting, “Any political entity has the right to separate itself from a larger body of which it is a part and peacefully to establish its independence as a free and legitimate state in the eyes of the world.”

Jason Sorens, a political scientist at SUNY Buffalo, while acknowledging that the dis-United States are not in the immediate offing, urged the delegates to “move ahead with political party infrastructure to have it in place” in case of an “industrial-energy-media complex is running an empire on the ruins of the republic,” said Vermont Commons Publisher Rob Williams, who does not think that simply putting Democratic hands on the levers of power solves anything. It’s the levers themselves that have to be removed.

Would the union miss Vermont? Sure. But as a young John Quincy Adams said, “I love the Union as I love my wife. But if my wife should ask for grab the flintlock, bar the door, and barricade myself in for a Night of the Living Dead siege. (The Free Staters take no position on secession, though a faction thereof desires an independent Republic of New Hampshire.)

“And the movement now begins,” announced Kirkpatrick Sale, founder of the Middlebury Institute (a secessionist “clearinghouse”), at the banquet. They agreed to meet again next year, perhaps in the South. (In Chattanooga, as it turned out.) Sale wanted to put secession “on the national agenda as a legitimate thing to think about.”

Think what you will. This is radicalism deep-dyed in the American grain. “The military-industrial-energy-media complex is running an empire on the ruins of the republic,” said Vermont Commons Publisher Rob Williams, who does not think that simply putting Democratic hands on the levers of power solves anything. It’s the levers themselves that have to be removed.

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Would the union miss Vermont? Sure. But as a young John Quincy Adams said, “I love the Union as I love my wife. But if my wife should ask for
In March 2011, as this article goes to press, the Vermont Legislature is considering a comprehensive bill adopting the principles explained in this publication’s continuing series on “the commons”: that common assets of the state need to be preserved for the future, and users owe rent for their taking of these resources. State Rep. Chris Pearson (P-Chittenden) reintroduced the Common Assets Trust Fund Bill under the number H.385.

The bill can be found at: http://www.leg.state.vt.us/database/status/summary.cfm?Bill=H.0385&Session=2012

A related public trust bill, H.407, would establish a fee for extraction of groundwater taken by bottlers for resale, another policy advocated in this series (See Vermont Commons: Voices of Independence, No. 34; Mud Season 2010):


Thomas Paine wrote in Agrarian Justice (1795) that natural and produced property were different. Regarding the latter, he contended that equal distribution was unwarranted and unjust, but that in the realm of natural property everyone is entitled to an equal share or its financial equivalent. Vermont has a wide array of stones and minerals, including sand, gravel, crushed and dimensional stone, granite, marble, calcium carbonate, slate, and t alc, that fall into Paine’s view of common property. Some sort of financial reparation should be made to the citizens of Vermont to compensate them for the excavation of this commonly shared non-renewable natural resource. This article will outline the outdated governance of the mining industry and how it relates to Vermont. Second, I will draw upon working models of governance like the Alaska Permanent Fund, and other states. Third, I will discuss some of the options to increase state revenue by reclaiming a percentage of the economic rent (unearned excess profit) generated by the large corporations that mine in Vermont. My hope is that this will serve as a basis for further discussion on how Vermont can successfully manage its subsurface mineral resources in the future.

Outdated governance

Mining rights in Vermont are granted with ownership of land. Landowners in Vermont, if given an Act 250 permit, can extract as much material from their land as they see fit. Act 250 does not address depletion of limited resources, but only environmental impact. Landowners essentially own everything from the center of the earth to the moon. They are entitled to most

continued on page 14
Who Owns Vermont’s Rocks, continued from page 13 of the economic rent from sub-surface minerals, aside from some low corporate taxes, and real estate taxes. Economic rent is the unearned profit above all the costs of mining, including normal return on investment. It is the value of the resource itself, in the ground, which should belong to all of us. From the map shown here you can see that Vermont is one of only 11 states that collect no rent (severance taxes or royalties) on their natural resources. Vermont’s mining laws follow an outdated mode of governance.

To give an example of what I mean by outdated governance, “In 1872, Hawaii’s King Kamemehelva V died and ended a dynasty, Apache leader Cochise agreed to retire to a reservation, Susan B. Anthony was arrested for voting in the presidential election, and a dusty California outpost known as Los Angeles opened its first public library” (Los Angeles Times, 2008). The mining industry is still managed at the federal level under the General Mining Act of 1872, which sells off public lands at the federal level under the General Mining Act of 1872, which sells off public lands at

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mineral</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<td>Sand and gravel, construction</td>
<td>4,520</td>
<td>21,100,000</td>
<td>4,970</td>
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<td>5,240</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Crushed</td>
<td>4,290</td>
<td>23,900,000</td>
<td>5,110</td>
<td>30,800,000</td>
<td>5,480</td>
<td>37,000,000</td>
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<td>26,700,000</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30,600,000</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>27,800,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talc, crude</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>71,800,000*</td>
<td>85,400,000*</td>
<td>96,800,000*</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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* = partial total due to withheld data
1 = crushed slate withheld

percent of revenue on the sum of property and extracted mineral value in 2005. Taking this into consideration it is clear that mining corporations are receiving the majority of the economic rent created by the excavation of Vermont’s nonrenewable mineral resources. (Let’s not forget that any property taxes or minerals-extraction fees are deductible from corporate income prior to calculating corporate income tax.)

The question to consider now is what happens when we run out of these resources? The answer is simple: Vermont loses jobs and income, and gets a large cleanup bill when all that is left are abandoned mines and environmental waste. For example, Omya was recently found guilty of contaminating groundwater with mining waste: http://lawprofessors.typepad.com/land_use/2011/03/vermont-clinic-victory-in-ground-water-case.html.

Step 1: “A Permanent Fund”

Vermont needs to start thinking in the long term when it comes to the depletion of its nonrenewable resources. A permanent fund should be set
up where a percentage of economic rent generated from mining operations is put into trust to offset depletion. This fund could first be used to support environmental-sustainability projects and maintenance to Vermont infrastructure—like roads and bridges—that is negatively affected by mining operations. Vermont roads are constantly used by mining trucks that severely decrease their life span. As of now, taxpayer dollars are the main source of funds used for repair and maintenance of these roads, which has become a major issue in the state.

The second use of the permanent fund could be as a safety net when Vermont minerals are used up and the mining companies are long gone. These funds could offset some of the financial burden due to the loss of jobs and the decreased revenue of Vermont businesses that depend on these minerals in production. If Vermont had instituted a severance tax system that collected 10 percent of the extraction value of $96.8 million in 2005 it would have generated $9.68 million to be put into trust, plus unknown amounts from talc, slate, and granite. When resources become more limited and the value of the minerals increase, Vermont would collect its share of the increased revenues. The alternative is that the mining corporations can keep on collecting this increased economic rent. The choice is in the hands of Vermont’s governing body to decide where this money should go.

The last question to ponder is what incentive would there be for mining corporations to stay in Vermont and continue to mine if this new system were to be implemented? Times are a-changin’, and as I have detailed above, new laws and royalty systems are on the horizon at the national level as well as at the state level. Many countries are catching on to this philosophy of common-asset ownership and sovereign wealth. The bottom line is that Vermont won’t be pushing companies out to explore greener pastures because there won’t be any.

Will the mining companies argue, complain, threaten, and lobby about this proposed change? Yes. Will they still stay and continue their mining operations? Yes, as long as the revenue sharing is fair and they retain a reasonable rate of return. Vermont needs to reclaim the rights to all its natural resources, including minerals. By setting up a permanent fund to offset the extraction of non-renewable mineral resources, Vermont will ensure the prosperity of its amazing heritage and provide a current and future flow of revenue for its citizens.

References

Table 2: Vermont Mining Revenue 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tr>
<td>Production/Extraction Value</td>
<td>$96,800,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct Mining Earnings</td>
<td>$63,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listed Property Value</td>
<td>$132,228,257</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property Taxes (includes state tax of 1% and ave 1.79% municipal tax)</td>
<td>$3,678,990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Vermont Land Value Grant List. Mailed from the Property Valuation and Review, PO Box 1597, Montpelier, VT 05601.
The newly created downstairs theater and bar space at the Savoy Theater in Montpelier was filled to overflowing on a February Tuesday night. The crowd had turned out to watch short, snappy presentations on the transition from oil dependence to community resilience. The format forced the speakers to keep moving: each was allowed to submit 20 slides, and the computer kept each slide up for only 20 seconds. After the full six minutes and 40 seconds had passed, the name of the next speaker flashed on the screen, for 20 seconds, and then the next presentation began.

The event was organized by Kate Stephenson, executive director of Yestermorrow Design/Build School in the Mad River Valley. Ben Graham of Transition Town Montpelier had suggested it as a way to bring the Yestermorrow community together with the Transition community. The format of 20 slides for 20 seconds apiece is called Pecha Kucha, Japanese for “chit-chat.” It was created in 2003 in Tokyo, suited to a 21st century with a short attention span, a time of 10-minute YouTube clips and 140-character Tweets. Stephenson thinks that the format had a lot to do with the event’s popularity. “The structure allows for a lot of individual creativity. And it’s much more interesting to see ten different people speak in one evening than to necessarily hear any one of them speak for an hour.”

For the February event, 12 speakers were crammed in, with a 10-minute intermission. The computer also timed the intermission, starting up the seventh presentation exactly 10 minutes after the “Intermission” slide flashed on.

Vermont Commons was well represented among the presenters. Rob Williams started the chitchat evening by yakking about Vermont Yak Company, which his family operates with others in the Mad River Valley. Williams sees the furry beasts as well-suited to Vermont’s climate, and he showed pictures of yaks in snow and yaks among tall burdock to prove it.

Ben Falk’s presentation was on building topsoil, regenerative agriculture, and communities during a time of peak oil. Gaelan Brown showed pictures of the woodchip compost pile for heating water that he’s been testing at his house. Among the other presenters, architect Bill Maclay presented his answer to how to get buildings to net zero energy use, and beyond: calculate existing loads, reduce them 80 percent to 90 percent, and fill in the rest with renewables. Photos and drawings illustrated how attractive net-zero buildings can be.

Jesse Greig of Recycle North showed the team of work-study students that has been learning construction as they have helped renovate and insulate the Barre building for the ReStore and Recycle North.

Diane Gayer showed a portfolio of real and imagined communities, and features like a riverside rail trail that make for a stronger local community. After the event, people stayed for untimed chitchat with each other. Except there was a time limit: the Savoy had a movie booked at 8:30, so eventually the crowd was shooed out. “Next time we’ll set it up so there’s no time constraint like that,” said Stephenson.

She has already scheduled that “next time,” announcing plans to hold another “Pecha Kucha: Ideas For a World Without Oil” at the Big Picture Theater in Waitsfield on Tuesday, May 17 (7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.). She is also planning a follow-up in Montpelier in the fall.

“It was very fun,” said Stephenson, referring to the February event at the Savoy. “Honestly, I think people should do more of these. It’s relatively easy to organize. As long as one person collects the slides, using PowerPoint you can throw it together in minutes.” And minutes is all that people get for their presentations. But Pecha Kucha shows you can make a big impression in just a few short minutes.

**Transition Times: Pecha Kucha Keeps Transition Ideas Snappy**

Pecha Kucha was created for a 21st-century attention span. “The structure allows for a lot of individual creativity. And it’s more interesting to see ten different people speak in one evening than to necessarily hear any one of them speak for an hour.”

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**“Transition Pecha Kucha: Ideas for a World Without Oil”**

Co-Sponsored by Yestermorrow Design/Build School and Transition Town Montpelier  
**Location:** Big Picture Theater, Route 100, Waitsfield, Vermont  
**Date:** Tuesday, May 17th  
**Time:** 7:00-8:30pm  

**Details:** Join Transition Town Montpelier and Yestermorrow for a rousing evening of PechaKucha. Drawing its name from the Japanese term for the sound of “chit chat,” PechaKucha is a presentation format based on a simple idea: 20 images x 20 seconds each. The format makes presentations concise and keeps things moving at a rapid pace. Come hear a variety of movers and shakers who are thinking about Transition present their projects, design work, inspiration and dreams for the future. Topics include community building, Permaculture, herbal medicine, renewable energy, natural building, green transportation. We’ll feature 12 different presenters, who will be required to submit their 20 slides in advance. Free and open to the public, donations welcome. Cash bar and food available at the Big Picture Café. Join us after the presentations for informal networking and conversation.

Kate Stephenson  
Executive Director  
Yestermorrow Design/Build School
There are several red herrings flopping wetly in our midst. Boss Kiss (Burlington Mayor Bob Kiss) is trying to sell a doozy with his admonition that “no one can be ruled out” as a partner in fighting climate change in Burlington. The mayor insists we must pursue partnerships even with the likes of Lockheed Martin, a corporation that has done its utmost to both create climate change through the carbon-belching military and to perpetuate climate change inaction through its membership in the Chamber of Commerce—to say nothing of the effects on Burlington’s homegrown green industry of inviting a politically favored financial behemoth like Lockheed to the party. To anyone serious about addressing climate change, this partnership is the anti-matter of sense.

But wait, there’s more! Bob Kiss and the City of Burlington have another big plan in the works: they plan to expand Burlington International Airport, hoping to double the number of cars and planes that travel hither and yon each day. Given that air travel is one of the bestest ways to create climate change, methinks the mayor may be beating the oft-mentioned plowshares over his own head.

But this isn’t about climate change because tiny Burlington, Vermont, can’t do squat about that. Even if every man, woman, and child in Burlington were to stop producing carbon emissions, there would be no effect on climate change. Only concerted action by whole nations can ameliorate the unstoppable effects of this global phenomenon.

In light of this unfortunate reality, framing the Lockheed partnership as a responsible answer to climate change is so nonsensical it suggests a purposeful obfuscation of the real agenda. We can only retire to the fainting couch to speculate (money!) what Bob Kiss hopes to get from Lockheed in exchange (money!) for the massive green-washing benefits LM would extract from the arrangement (there is a great sucking sound coming from the general direction of Burlington Telecom!). Yet this fish is but a wee smelt in the wider sea of simplistic piscine rhetoric. Another red herring set loose upon the tide of our national consciousness is the idea that we are, like, totally broke, and must therefore give up all which separates us from the beasts of the forest. The winger elite tell us that we simply don’t have the money to keep all the frilly pretties we once held dear: jobs that pay well enough to support a family, a spot at the polls that isn’t crowded out by some lard-ass corporation, and an educational system that is more than 12 years of industrialized torture by test. Yeah, we’re making the tough choices all right, at least in terms of non-military discretionary spending that makes up only 12 percent of our overall costs.

Pro-“choice,” all right

More to the point, what other choices have we made that might have had some role in emptying the national coffers? We choose to indulge the Military/Industrial/Congressional Complex in its dogged prosecution of a perpetual-war strategy to the tune of at least $1.2 trillion a year. In the midst of the current shrink-that-government-baby-down-to-a-drownable-size hysteria, Boeing just got the green light for a $35 billion modified 767...
Radical Sahm, continued from page 17
tanker project, a plane designed for the midair refueling of nuclear-armed bombers intended for use in retaliation to a Soviet first strike. Like the trillion-dollar F-35 program, this is a War Games-era military program that has slogged its way through years of yawns and one rather spectacular takedown in 2005 that sent Boeing’s chief executive officer to federal prison, and now triumphantly re-emerges, re-branded as a jobs program for Boeing’s hometown of Everett, Washington. Not a single sound bite was wasted trying to argue that the plane is actually necessary. It bears repeating that the military sucks at job creation. One Congressional study estimated that moving money from the Pentagon to state and local governments would create two jobs for every job eliminated. Another recent example from the MICC is the $2.5 billion allocated to the purchase of additional C-17 cargo planes in 2010. Neither the White House nor the Pentagon wanted these planes but Congress ordered them anyway! At a cost of $45 billion for the initial run, the C-17 replaced two perfectly serviceable transport planes—the 121 C-5 and the 265 C-144—so the unnecessary procurement of more C-17s adds insult to injury.

We chose to allow the banking class to extrapriate $13 trillion in wealth during the financial crisis that their pathological greed created. The financial industry doesn’t create wealth, it just shuffles claims on existing wealth, so the fact that this “industry” now claims $13 trillion it would not have had but for the bailout represents a simple transfer of wealth from the people to bankers. Imagine for a second what the State of Vermont could have done with just the $13 billion funneled to Goldman Sachs to cover its exposure to AIG, to say nothing of the $590 billion in low-interest emergency loans GS received. Maybe with that kind of money we wouldn’t have the worst railroads in the entire country, and we wouldn’t be contemplating wishing our mentally ill citizens goodbye and good luck managing that schizophrenia on your own.

We choose to allow corporations to hide billions of dollars in income through tax-avoidance constructs like un-repatriated profits, retained earnings, and undistributed profits. The tax value of these legally hidden assets is estimated between $37 billion and $100 billion per year. We chose to extend the Bush tax cuts making more than $250,000 per year, sacrificing $40 billion in revenue this year alone.

We did this while prosecuting two wars bought on credit to the tune of $200 billion a year. We did this during a recession that has at least 16 percent of the workforce either unemployed or underemployed—and that doesn’t take into account those who exhausted their benefits. It is important to put this already terrible number into the context of a labor participation rate of only 65 percent. There are fewer people in the labor force today than at any time since 1984, and we can’t employ almost 20 percent of them.

We go forward with these indefensible uses of the people’s wealth while concurrently making a show of fiscal responsibility by proposing to cut $1 billion from Headstart, a program that has proven to be the most cost-effective way to combat disparities in educational achievement by addressing the problem of poverty and cultural disenfranchisement. We depict public-sector workers as lazy, greedy, as “the haves” to the private-sector “have nots,” and most ridicu-

lously as the root cause of our spittle-inducing, faux financial malaise. This argument is even less credible than Newt Gingrich’s recent exonerating of his wandering penis as a direct function of his boundless love for America. We choose to give the most destructive, least productive, least deserv-

ing, and richest among us a king’s ransom at our moment of greatest vulnerability, and task those least able to give a drop more with making up the difference. It makes even a wide- and dewy-eyed optimist like me wonder: Do Republicans want the government to fail?

The final herring and choice: we choose war in the land of the tribalist isolationist, whack-doodle-dapper-dandy under the pretext of defusing a humanitarian crisis. NEWSFLASH: Congo has been in the grips of a humanitarian crisis since 1996 and five million people have been killed there, so if we are really feeling bad about all the deadness happening in Libya, why aren’t we discussing action in Congo, or Ivory Coast, or Detroit, or Baltimore? Of course this is a flimsy ruse that Tom Ashbrook thought up to pump our empathy glands. The powers that be couldn’t give a shit about dead Libyans and won’t even acknowledge the growing pile of dead Bahrainians and Yemenis. Hell, we can hardly get it up for dead Americans these days unless

It bears repeating that the military sucks at job creation.

Another red herring set loose upon the tide of our national consciousness is the idea that we are, like, totally broke, and must therefore give up all which separates us from the beasts of the forest.

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They happen to be rich people caught up in the mother of all Darwin Awards ceremonies off the coast of Somalia.

Our willingness to consider an entangle-

ment in another Middle Eastern civil war reeks of desperation, as does the suggestion that we drain the strategic reserve to combat gas prices now nudging $4 a gallon, a price that would be welcomed like a cool breeze on hot day in Europe. This is a backhanded admission of the current paradigm’s inability to react rationally or responsibly as the world tips into a pick-your-poison sampler of resource decline that our elites cannot acknowledge without assenting to their own extinction.

Enter the red herring: a device to ensure that confusion reigns, that manufactured bitter-

ness divides, and that reckoning is delayed long enough for the necessary changes to be made and the scene set for Feudalism version 2.0.
Wicked Harris County jail averaged twenty-two deaths a year. The most recent was a man brought in for a hot check who then died from some sort of choke hold administered by some sort of guard. So the word was out: The feds were coming in to investigate the string of deaths and wondering what else was being violated. What would they find in Harris County jail?

What I found was thirty hours of a processing nightmare with no sleeping unless you liked sleeping on a cement floor where a stream of women had come and gone for years. Plus it was crowded. Plus it was cold. One woman got so cold she wiped the only roll of toilet paper and wrapped her legs to keep warm. Another woman yanked the plastic garbage liner out of the trashcan, ripped a hole for her head, and pulled it over her entire body. I saw two women digging in the trashcan for empty sandwich bags to put on their hands and feet. I got cold and stayed cold because a guard took a real dislike to me after I didn’t answer a question near as quick as she thought I should have answered it and sent my processing papers back for the next shift. “Double time for you,” she said. Then she repeated what every guard loved to say, “We can turn out the lights in this cell and nobody will ever know you’re there.” And it wasn’t an empty threat. It was real.

At six o’clock in the morning, I was ordered out of the holding cell and thrown into a medical unit with fifty other women. Every seat on the long bench anchored to the wall was taken, and at least twenty women were sprawled on the floor. I was one of the women on the floor and confused out of my mind. I got dizzy just lifting my head. I hadn’t had water in two days but liquids were not big with the guards. Actually, they weren’t big on anything. My breath was beginning to stink, too, but I didn’t worry. Everybody and everything in that cell was stinking: clothes, bodies, floor, and the toilet next to my head. But for once it was not cold. It was hot! And fifty female bodies made it worse.

The medical unit was a little strange. Typically, vomiting on the floor wouldn’t land you in the medical unit. Having a heart seizure wouldn’t do it. You could bleed to death on the floor and it would be all right. One of the girls sprawled on the floor next to me explained the crowded medical room. “The feds are coming next week,” she said. “Checking who is and who ain’t getting medical attention if they want it. Seeing who died, too, and what were the circumstances.”

Apparently, everybody coming into Harris jail now was being sent straight to medical after thirty hours of processing torture. Some were genuinely sick (a staph infection that was a potential killer), some were mentally ill (one girl went into a hysterical frenzy every time she was touched, saying she was a model and a college graduate and had four boyfriends and the only reason she was in jail was because somebody stole her air conditioner). One young girl was eight months pregnant and said she knew three women who had lost their babies in jail. But even though her water was leaking and she was bleeding, she thought she would do all right. She would be okay.

A skinny woman sitting cross-legged on the floor next to me leaned into a group of girls and whispered, “Do not dare talk to those investigators coming here. You will end up dead.” Her own daddy had died in this same jail. “Ruled a suicide,” the girl said, “but don’t tell me he done it. There wasn’t no way he could’ve killed himself where he was found. No way.”

Another inmate tried to convince the girls to talk to the investigators. She said she saw a woman die. “Right there,” she said, and pointed to the low cement bench the girls were sitting on. “Margarita was her name and before she died that woman said, ‘Lookey here at these sores. Lookey here.’ Margarita had a reason to be scared as hell. She had two huge cankerous sores—one on her chest and another on her arm. Well, Margarita died right there. She had diabetes and a staph infection.” I got the feeling we were gonna sit in medical for a very long time and I was right because a guard came in and yelled, “Y’all gonna be here a long time. Might even have to pull y’all out for court, then throw y’all back in.”

Eventually the close quarters and the heat drove the girls with the air-conditioner problem nuts and some of the inmates started howling to be let out of the room. WE WANT OUT! One girl muttered to herself, “It don’t matter. It’s crazy crowded upstairs, too. Wherever you go, it’s crazy crowded.”

I spent all morning and most of that evening in medical. Little did I know how lucky I was because next on the jail agenda was the strip-down. Total strip-down. In the nude. It was worse than having a baby and having the entire fire department come in to watch. I was getting a little sick about the whole thing besides not being fed for two whole days and I tried to imagine myself in a room all by myself, but nope, twenty women went into total strip-down with a sadistic guard loving every minute of it. It was worse than having two babies. And me—even as a fifty-something adult—I was the one who had difficulty saying the word brassiere.

Diane Wilson is a fourth-generation shrimper, former boat captain, and mother of five. Since 1989 she has launched legislative campaigns, demonstrations, and hunger strikes in support of environmental justice. She has been jailed more than 50 times for civil disobedience, most recently arrested for protesting at a BP meeting in London. Wilson is author of An Unreasonable Woman: A True Story of Shrimpers, Politicos, Polluters, and the Fight for Seadrift, Texas and Holy Roller: Growing Up in the Church of Knock Down, Drag Out; or, How I Quit Loving a Blue-Eyed Jesus and co-founder of the advocacy group the Texas Jail Project and the women’s antwar group Code Pink.
In 1962, at the age of 19, I took over my parents’ farm in Lungau, Salzburg. Since then I have managed the Krameterhof in my own way. I have built ponds, terraces and gardens, kept fish and wild cattle, I have grown mushrooms, set up an alternative tree nursery and so much more. Despite the fact that there are many different areas a farm can specialise in, it was important to me that I did not focus on any one source of income. I wanted to remain as flexible as possible, so that I would always be able to react to changing market conditions. In addition, my interests at the time were so broad that there was no way I would have been able to decide on just one area. Over the years, this decision has been proved right again and again. It is true that many people called me ‘crazy’ during my time as a young farmer. They said that my methods would not amount to much and that I would soon have to sell the farm, but success proved me right in the end. Since then I have managed the Krameterhof in my own way. I have grown mushrooms, set up an alternative tree nursery and so much more. Observing my plants and livestock also gave me fresh energy. Nature and my family have helped me to persevere despite the nightmarish bureaucracy. It is incomprehensible to me that a person with so many innovative ideas should have so many hurdles and stumbling blocks put in their way. The fact that I have not let myself be intimidated and do not stay quiet just to please people has given me a reputation for being a ‘rebel farmer’. The fact that it is actually necessary to become a ‘rebel’ to run a farm in harmony with nature is really very sad! The administrative system has become overgrown and nips any creative thought in the bud. It is the responsibility of those in power to solve these problems. We have to make democracy our guiding principle instead of acting like lemmings and following the masses blindly, otherwise one day we will lose our democracy and our rights. On my farm I have no problems with large populations of ‘pests’, because nature is perfect and keeps everything in balance. I only wish that our administrative system could be regulated in a similar way, so that the bureaucracy does not push us to breaking point and we are not punished for thinking creatively. I think we all need to work to combat this unbearable situation and bring this ‘bureaucratic overpopulation’ back under normal levels.

In the summer of 1995, I received a letter from the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences in Vienna asking if they could hold a seminar at the Krameterhof. Through this seminar I learned for the first time that there was a term for my farming methods: ‘permaculture’. This word was coined by the Australian ecologist Bill Mollison and his student David Holmgren and is derived from ‘permanent agriculture’. A permaculture system is a system that resembles nature and is based on natural cycles and ecosystems. Some of the students from the seminar sent me a few books on permaculture. As I read the books I could only agree with the arguments within them. The fundamental thoughts and ideas in these books were incredibly similar to my own methods. I discovered that whilst there are many new farms, which claim to use ‘permaculture’ methods, there was not a single one that worked in the same way as ours on the Krameterhof. This is because the concept of permaculture was first developed in 1978, whereas I began to create gardens and ponds and experiment with sustainable systems in my youth. My methods have had over 40 years to develop. I have had time to continually improve upon and develop them so that now I have as little work to do as possible and I still achieve good yields. It was obvious to me that I was doing this by imitating natural cycles. What aspect of nature could I improve upon when nature already functions perfectly? Every time I tried to improve upon nature I quickly realised that I had only created more work for myself and the loss in yield was greater. So I always returned to the natural way, which, as far as I am concerned, has proved to be the only right one.
The following excerpt is from *Wild Law: A Manifesto for Earth Justice, Second Edition* by Cormac Cullinan

**Laws Of Oppression**

I was probably fortunate to have studied law in apartheid South Africa. It meant that right from the beginning I was very aware that states use law as a method of social control, that laws reflect a particular view of the world held by those with political power, and that there is not necessarily a healthy relationship between law, justice and morality. It also meant that I was never in awe of the ‘majesty of the law’ or believed that having a complex yet rationally consistent set of rules was an end in itself. The fact that I was involved in organising student marches and other anti-government activities that were illegal at the time, also gave me a healthy disrespect for many of the involved debates that some legal theorists immersed themselves in. Issues such as whether or not there is a moral obligation to obey the law simply because it is the law, or whether or not a morally repugnant law is law, seemed simple in those days. Whatever the niceties of the various academic points of view, when confronted with really repugnant laws that are nevertheless enforced with whips, imprisonment and worse, the doubts evaporate. I, and many others, found that at these times we took guidance from our consciences and hearts and not from logic or theory. Valuable though logic is in discerning truth, sometimes the heart or intuition is a better guide in the turbulence of experience.

'The proof of the pudding, as they say, is in the eating. In my view, the deteriorating condition of Earth is the proof that the human self-governance pudding has gone bad. Our systems for regulating human behaviour are not protecting Earth, our home, from destruction, because that is not their purpose. The problem of inadequate self-regulation cannot be solved at the level of legislative reform. The problem is not simply that our laws need refining to be more effective. The fact is that, by and large, these laws do give accurate expression to the defective worldview that underlies them. Our legal and political establishments perpetuate, protect and legitimise the continued degradation of Earth by design, not by accident.

In this chapter I will discuss some examples that I think illustrate this point, as well as referring briefly to some of the jurisprudence that lies behind the legal systems of the cultures that currently dominate world society.

**Symptoms**

There are few areas in which the arrogant and obsessively anthropocentric worldview of the dominant societies is more apparent than in the law. The law reserves all the rights and privileges to use and enjoy Earth to humans and their agents (and usually only selected categories of those, at that). It has also reduced other aspects of Earth and the other creatures that live on it, to the status of objects for the use of humans. The grandiose constitutions of the mighty nations form the arching vaults of the homosphere, and describe it and its aspirations. The law prescribes how we relate to other humans, to other inhabitants of this planet and to Earth itself. It punishes and takes revenge on those who do not conform. It legitimises the eternal extermination of species and the most profound disrespect and abuse of the Earth that sustains us.

If all this sounds like hyperbole, consider the following, which is true of the legal systems of almost all the cultures that currently dominate human society.

**Other Aspects Of Earth Are Defined As Objects Without Rights**

Animals, plants and almost every other aspect of the planet are, legally-speaking, objects that are either the property of a human or artificial ‘juristic person’ such as a company, or could at any moment become owned, for example by being captured or killed. For as long as the law sees living creatures as ‘things’ and not ‘beings’, it will be blind to the possibility that they might be the subjects (i.e. the holders) of rights. It is simply legally inconceivable for an object to hold rights. In other words, the jurisprudence of most of the world does not recognise, as Thomas Berry expresses it, that ‘the universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects’.

Another consequence of recognising only humans as beings, is that any sacred or spiritual dimension of any other form of life, or of Earth itself, is denied, and in the eyes of the law, does not exist.

The only rights recognised by law are those that are enforceable in a court of law, and these may only be held by human beings or by ‘juristic persons’ like companies. This means that from the perspective of our legal systems, the billions of other species on the planet are outlaws, and are treated as such. They are not part of the community or society that the legal systems concern themselves with, and have no inherent right to existence or to have a habitat in which to live. This may sound like an exaggeration when most countries have laws that protect designated species and habitats, for example in national parks. However, this type of legislation does not confer rights on non-humans, it merely restricts some aspects of human behaviour, usually to ensure that other humans can continue to enjoy wild areas and creatures.

Even if a legal system were to recognise that other species are beings, we must still overcome the difficulties of how any ‘rights’ that they may have will be protected and asserted. This is difficult but essential. A right that cannot be enforced is not a right at all.
News From Chelsea Green Publishing

Announcing eight guides for beginning and experienced farmers, published with the Northeast Organic Farmer’s Association (NOFA)

Organic Soil-Fertility and Weed Management by Steve Gilman – Covers the critical importance of healthy soil; the soil ecosystem, nutrient availability, including information on nitrogen deficiencies, phosphorous shortages, and potassium starvation in crops; how to think holistically about weeds; ecological weed control strategies.

Crop Rotation and Cover Cropping: Soil Resiliency and Health on the Organic Farm by Seth Kroeck – Covers the history of crop rotation and cover cropping in the Northeast; managing disease, pests, and weeds with crop rotation and cover cropping; how to map and implement effective rotations; the economic costs and benefits, including strategies for limiting costs and maximizing profits.

Compost, Vermicompost and Compost Tea by Grace Gershuny – Covers the principles of biology and organic composting; the importance of temperature, aeration, and moisture control; materials, including additives and inoculants; biodynamic preparations; cost estimates for site preparation, equipment, and labor; the finished product, including how to determine quality when the process is complete, and where, when, and how much to apply on the garden or farm; recipes for compost tea and other brewed microbial cultures; compost and the law.

Growing Healthy Vegetable Crops: Working with Nature to Control Diseases and Pests Organically by Brian Caldwell – Covers basic concepts of pest control, such as host susceptibility, soil health, genetic resistance, and factors inherent to specific ecosystems; practical approaches to reducing disease; rescue treatments, including microbial and botanical applications; designing crop rotations to reduce pests; unorthodox approaches to pest control; identifying pests.

Organic Dairy Production by Sarah Flack – Covers making the decision about organic certification; maintaining soil health and managing manure; crop production and grazing management, including information on forage species, pasture management, and setting up a grazing system; selecting and maintaining the health of your livestock, including details on nutrition, winter and summer feed considerations, seasonal milking, and prevention and treatment of common diseases; selling milk and value-added dairy products; the economics of organic dairy production.

Organic Seed Production and Saving: The Wisdom of Plant Heritage by Bryan Connolly – Covers why seed saving is of critical importance; the genetics of hybrid varieties; selecting heirloom varieties for seed growing and saving; growing seed for market; the biology of pollination; information on harvesting, cleaning, drying, and storage; details on individual seed crops.

Whole Farm Planning: Ecological Imperatives, Personal Values and Economics by Elizabeth Henderson and Karl North – Covers systems science; farm- and food-system economics; how to assess the whole farm, including people, money, and physical and mental assets; how to understand farm ecosystems, such as water and mineral cycles; dynamics of the biological community, and energy flow; setting goals.

Humane and Healthy Poultry Production: A Manual for Organic Growers by Karma Glos – Covers organic poultry basics, including how to create humane and healthy living conditions; establishing facilities, including how to choose and manage housing and equipment, how to choose and use litter, and how to manage outdoor access, brooding, grazing and pasturing; purchasing and brooding chicks; organic feed and supplements; poultry health care in the organic system; management challenges, such as production and culling, spotted shells, and yolk color; slaughter and processing; production expectations and economic viability.
Can you imagine in five minutes’ time, All your wealth gone, washed away in the tsunami tides? Can you imagine in half an hour’s time, Your house shaken and completely devastated? Can you imagine in three hours’ time, Your family torn apart forever? (From: From Reading the Almighty’s Sign, Taufiq Ismail, December 28, 2004)

We’ve been watching news of Japan’s earthquake, tsunami and nuclear crisis with a mix of awe, fascination, helplessness and despair. Hurricane Katrina, meet the BP Gulf oil spill. These days, the Japanese murmur despair. Hurricane Katrina, meet the BP Gulf oil spill. These days, the Japanese murmur despair. Hurricane Katrina, meet the BP Gulf oil spill. These days, the Japanese murmur despair. Hurricane Katrina, meet the BP Gulf oil spill. These days, the Japanese murmur despair.

Can you do? While we may not be busy digging our control, “It’s out of our hands,” or “What can you do?” While we may not be busy digging out from the mud and checking our radiation levels yet, nature and technology are also overwhelming our ability to cope. Many of us are wondering: Is it possible to change direction? What will it take to chart a new future?

In Vermont, we try to chart this future by going “local.” From food (farm to plate) and energy (bio-mass, efficiency), to politics (secession), media (public access), finances (credit unions, co-ops) and health care (single payer, alternative therapies), we re-engineer our complex systems so they won’t fail us. But this ‘sustainable’ future is a brittle one. Best-laid plans can never predict or fully mitigate how complex systems will react. The real challenge is for us to improve our ability to handle change when, inevitably, it comes, in the form of natural disasters or failures of human making.

In the aftermath of the Indonesian tsunami in 2005, Suidyo Markus wrote about his region’s way forward from that enormous disaster. He describes the power of “community resilience” as the way forward – the collective ability to cope with stress, overcome adversity, and adapt positively to change. At its core, Markus says, community resilience is a return to local relationship building and relies on the “existence of different local citizen groups . . . interacting in daily self-help and humanitarian activities.” He explains that these local groups establish solid civic networks through collaboration, “not only between individuals, but, more important, between community groups.” A grassroots civic network promotes “cohesiveness among the people” and forms the backbone of community resilience.

Developing individual and community resilience may be a more effective way of dealing with disasters or the slow erosion of our quality of life than trying to predict what will happen when our systems fail us.

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In a resilient community, children, are nurtured within cohesive family systems that promote connections, belonging and learning. People of all ages are part of vibrant social networks and support systems, willing to rely upon each other and work together for the common good. We embrace differences between people, promote a culture of acceptance and seek out others who bring new knowledge, connections, and strength to our community. We are motivated by inner meaning and purpose that we foster through collective rituals and spiritual life. We maintain a positive outlook, able to learn from adversity, seek out new information, reflect on experience and make necessary changes.

As community members, we are aware of our environment, enjoy being outdoors and remain attached to the natural world. Infrastructure (water, roads, telecom, health care) is sufficient and supports services necessary to maintain a healthy community. The economy is diverse and innovative and local, providing ample business and employment opportunities that emphasize homegrown trade. Our formal (local government) and informal (activists) leadership structures enable individuals, groups and communities to achieve their goals through a combination of planning and flexibility.

Sound familiar? Many people came to Vermont to live in and create communities just like this. And the fact is, Vermont’s “grassroots civic network” is more vital than most states. Take a look at our independent sector, the 4,000-plus nonprofit entities that operate at all social levels (families, tribes, organizations, schools, towns), across multiple sectors (arts, agriculture, human services), in every corner of our state. Vermonters volunteer more than 20 million hours a year to this “grassroots civic network,” which improves our collective ability to withstand sudden shocks and the slow erosion of our quality of life.

But it is precisely these organizations, the backbone of our community-resilience network, that are being dismantled by centralized power structures that use “difficult economic times” as the reason. National and state budgets are slashing funds for community wellbeing and our ability to withstand the future: aid to children and families, support for seniors and the disabled, arts, adult and K-12 education, mental health services. And do we need to mention the war on public-sector workers who deliver so many of these services?

What role do you play in assuring community resilience? How do you, can you, contribute to the grassroots civic network that includes your family, town, or watershed? What steps are you taking to develop a community where we are interconnected and trusting? Where do you value each other’s opinions so we can get together and solve problems? What will it take to embed these principles in our public policies? Our future depends upon us. •

Media By The People: Standing Before the Wave—Community Resilience is a Path to Our Future

Lauren-Glenn Davitian

Can you imagine in five minutes’ time, All your wealth gone, washed away in the tsunami tides? Can you imagine in half an hour’s time, Your house shaken and completely devastated? Can you imagine in three hours’ time, Your family torn apart forever? (From: From Reading the Almighty’s Sign, Taufiq Ismail, December 28, 2004)
A few weeks ago, I was surprised. It wasn’t a good surprise, though it wasn’t a bad surprise, either. It was the kind of surprise that takes a minute to sink in, and then forces you decide how you feel about it. It was the kind of surprise that makes you reconsider where you line up on the so-called “right-to-life” and “pro-choice” spectrum.

Let’s be clear, here: I am in a monogamous relationship. We have sex. I take birth control. But occasionally, a girl takes antibiotics or accidentally misses a day of the population-control pills and finds herself sitting on the toilet, counting the days back on her fingers, wondering when – and finds herself sitting on the toilet, counting tally misses a day of the population-control pills occasionally, a girl takes antibiotics or accidently?

I successfully made it out of the danger zone of having the social stigma of “teenager. I would give birth at 22, zone of having the social stigma of “teen mother” attached to me. I would give birth at 22, up? I could still move from Burlington to New York or Boston or Virginia or god knows where. I travel, could still do

As I pondered these thoughts, something strange occurred to me: I am no longer a teenager. I successfully made it out of the danger zone of having the social stigma of “teen mother” attached to me. I would give birth at 22, up? I could still move from Burlington to New York or Boston or Virginia or god knows where. I travel, could still do

Just as the federal government gets involved in state politics at times when it shouldn’t, it also should have no say in what can or cannot happen in a woman’s body.

Normally, I’m not one for politics, but this is absurd. Suddenly, my options, if I HAD been in fact pregnant, got a whole lot narrower. Americans, you think that supporting other people via welfare sucks? Great, then how about you don’t take away the preventive measures that stop young women like me from ending up on it? Without access to free or cheaper birth control, young women stand a greater risk of not being able to afford contraceptives, thereby increasing their risks of winding up pregnant and needing the taxpayers’ support on welfare. Without screening procedures, STDs will spread, and it won’t just be women affected. Cancer, UTIs, and other infections and illnesses will go undetected. True, abortions are a service that Planned Parenthood offers, but it only accounts for 3 percent of their services, and no federal funding supports it; there is nothing cheap about an abortion, and it is fully funded by the person (or people, because after all, it takes two to tango, among other things) submitting to the procedure. And more to the point: Do you really feel fine about forcing a woman to bear her rapist’s baby because you’ve made it harder for her to get an abortion? How about your kid sister, when she sleeps with a guy and is young and naive and stupid and doesn’t use a condom? Or, for those in the House, your daughter or granddaughter?

And then, on February 18, 2011, U.S. Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN) brought forth the Pence Amendment to strip Planned Parenthood of all federal funding. Since 1970, when President Nixon signed the Title X Family Planning program into law, the government has funded and provided access to contraceptive services, supplies, and information. In 2007, Congress passed a budget of about $283 million toward family planning under Title X, of which at least 90 percent went toward providing family planning services, and cost taxpayers only a fraction of a penny per person. That federal funding is the same money that gives women access to more affordable birth control, contraceptives, pap tests, breast exams, and STD screening and treatment. And that is the federal funding that was proposed to be taken away by a vote in the House of 240-185, despite an impassioned speech against it made on the House floor by Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA) about an abortion she had for medical reasons.

“I lost the baby,” Speier told the assembled representatives. “And for you to stand on this floor and suggest that somehow this is a procedure that is either welcomed or done cavalierly or done without any thought, is preposterous.”

The younger women of our generation shouldn’t have to pay for the decisions that I was lucky not to have to pay for. The younger women of our generation shouldn’t have to pay for them either. They should – and

You think that supporting other people via welfare sucks? Then how about you don’t take away the preventive measures that stop young women like me from ending up on it?

Just as the federal government gets involved in state politics at times when it shouldn’t, it also should have no say in what can or cannot happen in a woman’s body.
Green Blooded: Vermont at a Crossroad is an emerging documentary film project featuring the voices of Vermonters. Find out more at www.greenbloodedvt.com.

**Green Blooded. Provocative film title. Can you explain it?**

**Teo Erik Zagar:** Just came to me at some point for no apparently obvious reason. Probably a feeling I had about the sense of place and fidelity we full-time residents have for the territory [Vermont]. There’s also the distinctive character of the people – stubborn, striving for self-sufficiency and self-government, progressively minded, apt to engage with community and with a renewed awareness of the land as provider. And of course a healthy intolerance for bullshit, which we want to channel in the film.

**Where did the idea for this documentary film emerge?**

**T.Z.:** Around a campfire late one night not long after meeting Christopher. He’d recently moved to Barnard with his brother to start a CSA operation called Fable Farm, which has profoundly transformed and bonded our small community. We found that we had a lot of the same ideas and frustrations – politically, philosophically and creatively – and Chris had explored film in college. We just felt that we needed an outlet for what we were feeling in light of the times.

**Christopher Piana:** While tromping through the streets of New York City and observing the various statues and symbols that represent and celebrate industrialist history, I thought about the influence of story and wanted to create a film about the cultural explorers of today who’re creating a “New World.” Industrialization has created a purely cerebral experience that is detached from the intelligence of the heart. It’s reached a level of “Peak Absurdity” that has run its course and served its evolutionary purpose. So the question is, “How can we create another story and what does it look like?” Much of my inspiration for this film has thus emerged from observing the selfless commitment of people – young, old, and in-between – throughout the region who are digging in their heels, saying enough is enough, and channeling their frustration and resolve into creating another way of doing things.

**Are “green-blooded” Vermonters really all that different from other Americans?**

**C.P.:** Vermont’s unique agrarian history (time-line of development, way of being incorporated in the Union, etc.), landscape, size, and population combine to create cultural qualities that are definitely distinct from those of other bioregions. But I think people from all over are seeing through the veil and re-evaluating their survival strategies.

**T.Z.:** We might express our views and seek different solutions than people in other regions, but I think that all Americans need to be drawing the same conclusions about how a nation of 300 million or so can be effectively, humbly, and sustainably managed by a small group of mostly well-heeled, corporate-sponsored white males. When more people really start to struggle making ends meet buying groceries, heating their homes, paying for medical services and filling their tanks, when the lion’s share of public funding to our government goes to self-perpetuating wars, corporate welfare and an imaginary economic system, there should come a real wake-up call and gut check to see it for what it really is and start broadening the discourse just a little. There are other colors here than just red and blue.

**How many Vermonters have you interviewed thus far, and what’s your end goal, in terms of interviews?**

**T.Z.:** We’re choosing to define “Vermont” as anyone who has chosen to stake a claim here for the duration based on a love of the land and people and an eagerness to work together to ease the transition during the inevitable wealth and resource decline, which we shouldn’t view as a negative or tragic event at all, but something that will ideally lead to more common-sense practices and, in the words of Modern Times Theater, a return to old-fashioned difficulty. We’ve interviewed around 20 people so far but have a very long list of folks that we plan on talking to. We’re really just getting started, and we want to show people doing stuff more than we want to hear them talk about it.

**What has surprised you in making the film?**

**C.P.:** That from the French’s occupation and killing of the beavers for their pelts, the exploitation of our waterways for electricity by the bankers from Boston, to the current extraction of drinking water by international corporations without having to pay any royalties, Vermont was and is a banana republic.

**There are other colors here than just red and blue.**

Bow Thayer’s musical soundtrack in Green Blooded is very distinctive. Tell us about that relationship.

**T.Z.:** I first saw Bow at a small show with his band The Benders more than 10 years ago. I liked their style of unclassifiable bluegrass-y Americana so much I bought the CD. A few years later a woman who heard I made films and videos asked me if I could help make a music video for her boyfriend, who happened to be Bow. We wound up filming about a dozen kids dressed up as animals waving signs on the Statehouse steps right around the time the seeds were being planted for Green Blooded, so it became a very natural partnership. Bow’s body of work has been pretty influential in conceptualizing this project and he’s fully devoted to adding his notes to the film. His soundtrack will definitely set the tone.

**What’s been Green Blooded’s biggest challenge?**

**C.P.:** Two of our biggest logistical challenges have been finding funding as well as the time for Teo and me to collaborate (Teo’s down time is his busiest time, and vice-versa in the summer when I’m busy farming). An exciting conceptual challenge has been how to transcend the left-right box, and make this film about humans without labels who are working together to learn and grow in a balanced relationship with our landscape.

**T.Z.:** Funding, focus, and timing. Christopher is a farmer and I work in public school special education, so while our individual schedules are relatively conducive to making work on the side, they don’t really overlap. I’m free in the summer, which is his busiest time, and vice-versa in the cooler seasons. We’re also trying to really get a handle on how we’re going to thread and anchor continued on page 26
the film so we don’t end up with a messy montage of angry people complaining about what’s wrong with the world today and only show them talking about it. We need to show more than tell.

How can Vermonters support your film?

C.P.: With ideas, high-quality film footage, and fiat currency.

T.Z.: We’d love to get tips and suggestions for some spirited individuals and groups that we should be capturing. And of course, financial contributions are always welcome. Tax-deductible donations can be made through Rural Vermont or directly to the project. We’d like to be able to have the resources to create something with high production value, to present it ourselves all over the state, and to promote it as much as we can, and it all costs money.

What’s your take on nonviolent secession and the re-invention of Vermont as an independent republic?

C.P.: Given the current state of everything, I think that all ideas should be on the table. Nonviolent secession is an adaptive strategy and natural response to a centralized, vertical power structure out of tune with the needs of our communities. It might constitute an inevitable progression from the current state of dysfunction, when we’re forced to become more active participants in producing our survival. I think, however, that we need to not stop at the state level, but move this concept of re-invention even further to include the towns. Looking back to the indigenous people of this region, we find that the sovereign unit was the family band. There were macrobands, which were alliances between the family bands, but sovereignty ultimately resided in the local bands. And as a display of remarkable decentralization and empowerment, no one was obliged to listen to the chief, as he or she had to rely on his or her powers of persuasion, not coercion.

T.Z.: Coming from Slovenia, which declared independence from Yugoslavia with a self-determination and bravado that’s to be admired, I see the value in reevaluating our relationships, individually and collectively, with the political and profit-based systems that have a direct and mostly negative impact on most areas of our lives. Buckminster Fuller talked about creating new systems to replace ones that are broken instead of trying to fix them. Since just about everyone can now agree that what we’ve had in place for the last couple centuries is in fact broken, we should be pursuing new ways to live in balance with our neighbors and our resources. I know that’s a little pie-in-the-sky, but it just could catch on.

That said, I don’t see declared, formal political separation as the only way to go, or even a necessary step at this point, although in theory I support it. I think it starts with the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual self-determination to disconnect and disassociate from all the machinations we reasonably can if we find them to be morally repugnant or just lacking in ethics or reason. I think the separation will evolve naturally, not just here but in other regions as well, because I think it’s become increasingly clear that sending even the most well-intentioned, ballys representative to Washington won’t pull us out of the tailspin. Things are starting to fall apart on their own anyway, with our make-believe money system, unsustainable sovereign and municipal debt, and resource depletion, among many other things. So the answer is definitely not found in trying to “reform” or “regulate” the system, but doing something different and better. And it definitely has to be non-violent, although there is a lot of pent-up and perfectly justifiable rage out there that will have to be tempered and channeled into something productive.

We will continue to do get the word about Green Blooded through all Vermont Commons channels. Good luck with your important project, and thanks for speaking with us. •
The Seventeenth Amendment of the United States Constitution marked the end of the U.S. as a true federal republic.

Federalism is the word that describes the idea of a national government that shares the power to govern with self-governing states. The Constitution was written to establish and harmonize a balance between the national government and the state governments. When the Constitution was written, the framers feared that a concentration of power in a central government would usurp the states of the sovereign authority to govern through locally elected officials. They sought to prevent the overreach of government by creating an elegant framework to distribute power as widely as possible through a structured competition of natural self-interests. It is for this reason that the framers desired to protect the political power of the states. The intention was to preserve the integrity of the independent but united “laboratories of democracy.” The only authority the Constitution granted the central government was specifically enumerated powers. The Tenth Amendment reserved all other powers to the states and the people.

However, the founders knew that the Constitution alone would serve only as a “parchment barrier” against creeping encroachment upon state sovereignty by the national government. For this reason they included in the Constitution specific political structures to safeguard against the concentration of power. One important safeguard of state sovereignty was the creation of the Senate, the purpose of which was to allow the states to protect their sovereignty by participating in the national government as sovereigns. Under the original Constitution, senators were appointed by their state legislatures, not elected by the people. Madison, in the Federalist Papers, explained that the House of Representatives was regarded as a “national” institution because its members were elected directly by the people, but “the Senate, on the other hand, will derive its powers from the states . . . [and in this respect] the government is federal, not national.”

It was well understood at the time the Constitution was ratified that the states, not the people, were represented in the U.S. Senate.

In other words, the government in Washington is a “federal” government only if it incorporates the states into its very structure. The mechanism for this was written into Article I, Section 3 of the Constitution: “The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State chosen by the Legislature thereof . . .” The states, as sovereigns, were represented in the Senate. This created the necessary ability for the states to restrict the tendency of the national government to expand its power into the sovereign affairs of the states.

It was well understood at the time the Constitution was ratified that the states, not the people, were represented in the Senate. (But suppose that they [were] to be chosen by the people at large. Whom, in that case, would they represent? Not the legislatures of the states, but the people. This would totally obliterate the federal features of the Constitution. What would become of the state governments, and on whom would devolve the duty of defending them against the encroachments of the federal government?)

In 1913 the Progressive Movement succeeded in a decades-long fight in achieving the ratification of the Seventeenth Amendment, which stripped the states of political standing in Washington. The amendment was passed by Congress in June 1911, and adopted May 31, 1913. Led by William Jennings Bryan, the Progressives viewed the Senate as a “club” of state party bosses and the new amendment would open the doors to more independent candidates, chosen by the people and not the party leadership. Perhaps with the best of intentions, but contrary to the express intention of the framers, they stripped the states completely of a voice in our national government. (Another long-term consequence has been the introduction of vast spending by Senate candidates in order to achieve office.) The Progressives were either oblivious of, or indifferent to, the carefully crafted balance of power written into the Constitution.

The amendment provided, in relevant part, “The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, elected by the people thereof . . .” The amendment removed the authority of state legislatures to appoint senators and transferred it to popular election by the people notwithstanding the fact that the people already had a voice in the House of Representatives. Perhaps it is no coin...
Scession Briefs, continued from page 27

cidence that the national government began its exponential growth following the passage of the Seventeenth Amendment, just as soon as there was no longer a competing interest that could stop it. Concurrent with the adoption of the Seventeenth Amendment, the Sixteenth Amendment was also adopted in 1913, which granted the national government the ability to impose an income tax. And in the same year the Federal Reserve was established, giving the national government access to an unlimited source of money without the messy inconvenience of raising taxes. (That’s how we’ve paid for two wars and a trillion dollars in bailouts.) In one year the states were eliminated as a political force in Washington, the national government was given an unlimited power to tax, and an unlimited power to borrow money.

The responsibility to address questions in the areas of taxation, education, employment, disaster relief, public safety, transportation, health care, marriage, and property rights, to name several, was exclusively within the authority of the states. Since the adoption of the Seventeenth Amendment all of those issues, and many more, are now mandated, regulated, or directed out of Washington, D.C., far away from the people being impacted by those policies. While the state governments bear much of the burden of supplying nationally mandated services for their citizens, they have only secondary authority to do anything about the issues they face. When federal courts decline, as they frequently do, to interpret the Tenth Amendment as protecting the sovereignty of states, the states have no recourse.

The adoption of the Seventeenth Amendment ended the federalist republic that the framers had envisioned by terminating the political participation of the states in national politics. We now habitually cast our eyes on Washington to solve our local problems. Healthcare is local, not national. And yet, we are ceding control to regulators in Washington. In 2008 the average cost to win a seat in the U.S. Senate was $7,500,000.00, all spent to curry favor with “the people.” Both of our U.S. senators are eagerly in favor of Washington solutions. Why shouldn’t they be? They are national officials, not Vermont officials. All senators are national officials. They act in the national interest.

Return the power to appoint senators to where it belongs in our federalist republic, to the legislatures of our states. The United States began as an equal partnership between the States and the national government, a federal republic. Let’s return to federalism, and start by repealing the Seventeenth Amendment.

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The Conservation Leadership Institute is a learning option for students in the Woodstock Union High School. It is a place-based service-learning program that engages young people in addressing environmental issues in their community. So far this year, students in the program have learned about transportation and energy problems through hands-on projects such as repairing donated bicycles, helping insulate old homes, and working with local forestry resources.

The program appeals to students whose interests and learning styles are not served by seat time in classrooms. “A lot of what you learn in school is pointless,” one of them observed. “Once you’re in the real world, you’re going to see that you won’t find all the answers in a textbook. You learn from hands-on experience.”

The students gather in a small group with their teacher, Kat Coons, to discuss thought-provoking readings, reflect on their learning through personal journals, and get busy on their projects. “You’re actually doing something instead of just writing things down on paper,” said another student. He enjoys this approach to learning far more than “sitting in a cramped room just listening to a teacher,” and finds it more useful and relevant.

Ms. Coons points out that working as a team, young people interact differently than they do in classroom settings. They are freer to express themselves and respond to each other honestly. Team-building is in fact a deliberate aspect and goal of the program. As a result, she says, these teens are making a positive contribution to the community, and adults in that community have noticed that they “carry themselves” differently.

The Institute is a collaborative venture between the high school, the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, and the National Park Service, which operates the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park in Woodstock. All three partners contribute to the program budget.

VYCC is a dynamic statewide organization that provides community-service internship opportunities for youths, on summer crews and in a growing number of high schools during the academic year. Its programs emphasize team building and hands-on learning through conservation and restoration projects (for example, they maintain trails, refurbish historical buildings, improve wildlife habitats, and manage state parks). Its school programs have reawakened an interest in learning among students who were disenchanted and on the verge of dropping out.

The National Park Service is involved because education is an integral part of its mission. According to Christina Marts, the Assistant Superintendent of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park: continued on page 30
Christina Marts suggests that the two sides of education are compatible, that hands-on learning is another way of helping students master academic content.
patients at Medicaid reimbursement rates. Specialist incomes would be cut in half. Whether or not you think that specialists are “paid too much” is not relevant. What is relevant is that a specialist would be able to move to any other state in this country and earn two or three times as much income for performing the same job, taking care of sick people who need our services. For my specialty, there are currently over seven hundred jobs posted nationwide, so there is ample opportunity for doctors to move out of Vermont. Additionally, the provider incomes based on the proposed reimbursement rates are below what mid-level providers (i.e. nurse anesthetists, physician assistants) earn nationally, so you cannot look to this pool to replace the exiting physicians.

Under such a system of egregious disparity in incomes, does Vermont really think that it can recruit and retain specialist physicians? Physicians of all specialties (primary care specialties are specialties too!) are required for a healthcare system to offer comprehensive services to the population. This plan obviates the possibility of a comprehensive healthcare system.

In closing, I must pose the question: Where is the Vermont Constitutional authority for the government to take over the healthcare industry? I cannot find it when I read our state Constitution. I posed this question to a meeting of Franklin County legislators and was rewarded with blank stares. Shouldn’t this be the first question that our legislators ask of any proposed legislation? It does not matter if it would be nice to do something when the government does not have the constitutional authority to do it. There is no portion of our state Constitution that provides for the Legislature to fix prices for the services that any Vermont freeman provides. To the contrary, Chapter 1: Article 2 and Article 7 of the Vermont Constitution protect the property rights of the individual, and this legislative agenda is in direct opposition to these portions of the Constitution.

Either by the use of common sense (i.e. economics and human behavior) or by following the rules that govern our community (i.e. the Vermont Constitution), “Healthcare Reform” as it is currently presented should not be imposed on the people of Vermont.

Edward Pomicter, MD
Shelburne
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I co-taught the course, Rock Your Body, Speak Your Mind, to 22 teenagers at Goddard College in February. This course was part of the Winter Weekend Institute attended by approximately 80 Vermont teenagers and put on by the Governor’s Institute of Vermont. GIV also offers a handful of educational summer institutes in different disciplines for motivated Vermont high school students that take place on college campuses across the state. In case you have any question about the new crop of young people being raised in Vermont be sure to visit one of these institutes to be completely inspired and awed by the energy, skill, warmth, and optimism of our youth.

Our course, Rock Your Body, Speak Your Mind, was designed to give students a chance to think deeply about what is important to them, what they care about so passionately that they have to say it out loud – either through performance to a large audience or through private exchange with one another, and then to give them the skills to say it, to stand in their bodies and speak their minds even when to do so is scary and unsettling and the outcome of such an act unknown.

And these young people did it. They stood up and they said it. They gave voice to their hurts and hopes and their doubts and desires. They stood up for what they believed in and they listened to each other, they were changed by each other.

Much of the performance work they created came out of the writing prompt: I Have Something I Have To Say. I did the activity as well and I share my piece here. Both to model speaking my mind, and also because it is true:

I HAVE SOMETHING I HAVE TO SAY!

We should all get our sorry asses onto the small farms that still exist RIGHT NOW. Before they don’t exist any longer and we don’t eat, are choked by bad air, watch the seas wash over us, spend one more minute in our isolated-fucked-up-Facebook-brains.

If we don’t start touching dirt and working dirt and understanding the practical, pragmatic nature of we as earth— as feed me food so I can be strong and speak my mind—we are going to wither into war.

That’s right, war is the unact of not getting off our asses and going to help grow food with other folks, friends, people who create art in the carrots and carry it into plays and poems that slam. I see you looking at me like I’m crazy, but beyond me do you see the blue sky, the atmosphere, the birds going by?

I hear a bird beyond my back shoulder as its wings thump the air – the air we take for granted. I take my face down, my body down, tired and strong, and smell the dirt of the earth. It’s built from bones and worms and sunlight. I smell old banana peels and coffee grounds. I remember that delicious meal last summer, cucumbers and tomatoes and cheese in the salad, corn on the cob and strawberry shortcake for dessert and you beside me – all of this has returned to the dirt. I can smell it and taste it here.

I imagine us in the morning as the air is light and sits on the far hills and we take ourselves, our troupe of artists, to the fields and we make tomatoes and cucumbers grow with the help of every particle of dirt rooting for us. Sun feeding us and feeding the seed. We don’t talk about community; we are community, and we belong to the soil.

At night after the sun sets and the moon comes out we walk down the dirt roads and discuss the movement of celestial bodies and what it means to remember that everything doesn’t revolve around us, but that we rotate around the sun and the moon longs for the earth as she spins and that mystery is more present than knowledge.

Then as we return home we lie down quietly next to the two Jersey steers that are curled up together in the grass and we are silent.

This is what we do, because it is the only thing to do, because our lives depend on it, our hearts ache for it, and the earth that we are asks it of us.

So perhaps collapse, or perhaps instead we will all stand up and rock our bodies, speak our minds. Perhaps we will follow the lead of our youth and be courageous and say what we have to say even if it is scary, even if it is unpopular, even if we don’t know what will come of it. Maybe we will discover on the inside we are poets and politicians of a new order, a grassroots uprising, a farmstand happening. Maybe we will hoe and heal and harvest through the long summer days. Maybe we will come alive like the soil and our voices will be food for the hungry.
Here in Cabot, the first sticking snow fell in late November. It was only a few inches; tufts of winter-dead grass breached its surface at odd intervals, as if attempting to surface for a breath of air. The boys took immediately to their skis. Newly confident in their skills, they tucked the big hill in our pasture, flying straight toward the wire fence and then, when it seemed as if tears and blood could not be avoided, threw themselves to the snow-softened ground, whooping with joy. The cows looked on in wide-eyed bewilderment, and really, who could blame them?

Still, there was nothing to suggest it would be a hard winter. In middle December, when it began to snow in earnest, I rejoiced. After all, in only a few weeks there’d be a January thaw because, as you know, there is always a January thaw. The knowledge of the impending melt made the pleasure of the cold and snow that much more acute. I skied every day, or nearly so, gliding softly beneath the stolid winter sky over the snowed-in tracks from the fall’s softwood harvest.

Except the thaw never came. Oh sure, there were a couple days when temperatures hovered either side of 40. But unlike most years, when winter seems to need a breather before gathering itself for a second round, this winter never relented. The snow kept accumulating, until only the topmost fence wire remained uncovered by such a slight curtain of air that I could slide over the fence simply by leaning back to unweight the tips of my skis. The topmost fence wire is 40-inches off the ground.

Of course, it was foolish of us to expect anything else. We did so only because we are human beings, and, as such, suffer under the delusion that predicting the future is as simple as extrapolating from the past. For years, winter has been easy; for years, January has delivered a respite from the sharp teeth of the season. Why should this year be any different?

It may be obvious by now, but the story of our false assumptions about the winter past has much in common with our culture’s assumptions regarding the particulars of its future. As it has been, it will be. Unless it’s even better, for of course America’s greatest days are before her; of course the inexorable march of technology will lift all boats, bringing prosperity to those who have known only paucity. Of course.

But I’ve little doubt that at the very least, it diminishes us. Resilience, whether it’s personal, communal, or national, is not built on entrenched beliefs. Rather, it’s built on the understanding that the past is rarely an accurate predictor of the future, and that no matter how right we each think ourselves to be, sooner or later, we’re bound to be wrong.

Winter’s over. In hindsight, it wasn’t so hard, particularly once I let go of my expectation of those warm January days, of a March that felt like spring. In the end, it was just winter, and whatever resentment I harbored over how it unfolded had nothing to do with it. And everything to do with me. •

Bloodroot beckons.
We Go As Captives
by Neil Goodwin
Vermont Historical Society, 2010

I’m a sucker for escape stories, especially of the 18th Century with titles like The Narrative of Sir Hubert Tinklenot’s Capture, Imprisonment and Escape from the Savages of North Hampton. So I picked up We Go As Captives, The Royalton Raid and the Shadow War on the Revolutionary Frontier in anticipation of an enjoyable read.

The early history of Vermont is unique in that Vermont was the only state that created itself. Legend has it that Vermonters carry the pride of this accomplishment in their bones. We Go As Captives is another reminder of how the land, the climate, and the struggles for independence formed a small group of people who made their mark.

Before reading We Go As Captives I thought that the Royalton Raid was a British attempt to destroy and pillage Newbury, Vermont, and capture General Jacob Bayley and Colonel Benjamin Whitcomb, using a large number of Indians as the strike force. Furthermore, I had learned that, on account of it being difficult even for Indian war parties to sneak across Vermont without being noticed, these plans had been discovered. Not wanting to actually fight against the stronghold of Newbury but wanting some compensation as travel pay, they abandoned the attack against Newbury and turned to the soft target of Royalton. They did sneak up on Royalton, burn it to the ground, and capture the settlers, taking them back to Canada.

Now, having finished We Go As Captives, I don’t know what I know. But the details recounted by Mr. Goodwin (from his main source, the narrative of captive Zadock Steele) are vivid and fascinating. For example, there were 265 Indians serving under Capt. Philips (an Indian who served under Lt. Houghton) who pillaged the town and made the captives carry it North on their backs until this “fearsome military” had to skedaddle lest the local militia catch up to them. They dropped the real heavy stuff and kept the valuables, like mirrors. The captives (and four scalps) were important trophies for the braves because they represented lost warriors from days gone by, and besides, they could sell them to the Brits who could trade them back to the Americans. Slight problem for the Brits, however: American civilians were not much of a currency because the American military didn’t kidnap Canadian civilians, so there was no human traffic for the trade.

What to do? One thing was to pass some of the captured New Englanders on to households in Montreal as servants. Another option was for the prisoners to escape. There is no explanation as to why a captain served under a lieutenant. Perhaps we are supposed to assume that an English lieutenant ought to out-rank an Indian captain.

What I don’t know now that I thought I knew before is whether or not the orders originating from General Haldimand, and making continued on page 36
Free Vermont Media, continued from page 35

their way down the chain of command to Lt. Houghton of the 53rd were, in fact, to destroy Newbury and capture Whitcomb and Bayley. That is but a suggestion in the book. Goodwin refers to Bayley as a “prize captive” without mentioning any intent to actually capture him except for a much earlier failed raid at Peacham in March of 1781.

The Royalton raid was a public relations disaster with no military benefits to the Brits; but it was most satisfying to the Indians, mostly Kahnawakes (Caughnawagas), who got to dress up, to put the prisoners through adoption ceremonies, and to parade them into their villages. From Chapter 7: The return of a large force like this was an event of great importance to the village. Even before the procession arrived, each warrior with a scalp painted the flesh side red and displayed it proudly, and each in turn voiced a short, shrill, ear-splitting yell. After the fourth scalp call, each warrior with a prisoner gave a much longer outcry that should never have been conceived. Frightening settlers and running them off the land may have its advantages but there were only disadvantages to the perpetrators of the Royalton Raid. As Goodwin says: “Wrong Raid, Wrong Place, Wrong Time.”

I do have some criticisms of We Go as Captives. They are in the details, and particularly in Goodwin’s take regarding the Haldimand negotiations between General Frederick Haldimand (Governor General of Canada) and the Vermont contingent, made up of Ethan and Ira Allen and Governor Chittenden. I got the impression that Goodwin did not accept the common agreement among historians that the Allens had been altogether successful in pulling off the desired result. Haldimand and Burgoyne both considered the Vermonsters (viz. The Green Mountain Boys) a formidable enemy. Said Haldimand: “...having been from their earliest contests...continually in arms. They are in every respect better provided than Continental Troops and their principals more determined.” Said the usually belliscoe Burgoyne: “The Hampshire Grants...now abounds in the most active and rebellious race in the continent and hangs like a gathering storm on my left.” George Washington was equally respectful and wished that Congress would act to get Vermont officially on their side before it was too late.

The stage is now set for meaningful negotiations as the Allens and Chittenden knew that, should the Brits decide to make an all-out attack, even the Green Mountain Boys could not stem it. The intent of the Vermonsters was to keep Haldimand from ordering an invasion through Vermont, while 1) keeping the doors open for statehood or independence; 2) making statehood a necessary option for Congress (to keep Vermont from switching sides); 3) buying time for the Green Mountain Boys (in the fall of 1781) to harvest their crops and prepare for battle; 4) arranging an exchange of Vermont and British prisoners; and 5) negotiating a cessation of hostilities.

They needed to accomplish all this knowing that Congress was preparing to divide up Vermont between New York, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, and that Haldimand was sparing Vermont only because the Allens and Chittenden were holding out the carrot of a reunion with mother England. Note that both enemies (Congress and the British) were loath to attack Vermont as it would have meant very
In a book about Vermont, he fails to mention the British defeats at Saratoga. Oddly enough, the omission of the Battle of Bennington while relating the Republic of Vermont stopped virtually all aggressive action against the British. October 16, 1781. In other words, while raids were going on elsewhere, the Haldimand negotiations were not even claimed by New York until July 20, 1764. Since the founders of Vermont never recognized the claims of New York in the first place, they could not secede from it. The early settlers bought the land from New Hampshire. New Hampshire relinquished its claims. Subsequent claims were legally absurd. The legal arguments come from Blackstone’s Commentaries of 1765, in which he explains the concept of “safety of the whole,” or in Ethan’s words “the right to self-preservation.” The most persuasive legal argument may be found in Stephen Bradley’s “Vermont’s Appeal to the Candid and Impartial World,” approved by the governor and Council on Dec 10, 1779. This delicious document is found in The Public Papers of Governor Thomas Chittenden. It has narrative drive, made even better with its historical detail and adherence to the story of Zadock Steele.

The book takes us vividly through the adventures of the captives and puts the events in the murky context of frontier raids and prisoner exchanges. The escape from Prison Island, riding the rapids, is a good old adventure with villains and heroes and “cliff hangers” from the time they first conceive their plan until they (some of them) make it back to safety. The irony of the war having ended (Cornwallis surrendered on Oct 19, 1781) while the prisoners remain in captivity is not lost. And there is a dramatic tension as to who will go free and who will not as the prisoner exchanges drag on.

We Go As Captives has narrative drive, made even better with its historical detail and adherence to the story of Zadock Steele.

The legend of the hardy Vermonter has taken a beating even from the earliest days of its entry into the union. The likes of Slick Jersey Tichenor soon turned the state from Independent to Federalist. But the legend lives on, as every now and then we pass a resolution and get up on our hind legs to point out that we remember what independence is.

Frightening settlers and running them off the land may have its advantages but there were only disadvantages to the perpetrators of the Royalton Raid. As Goodwin says: "Wrong Raid, Wrong Place, Wrong Time."
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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.)

- **Givically-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.

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Join the Vermont Commons Cooperative!

An annual $100 co-op membership earns you:

- A 2’ by 3’ Vermont Independence flag made out of tough rip-stop nylon.
- 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 is our 2011 Commons Cooperative holiday meeting and party.

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Mail your $100 check made out to:

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Waitsfield, Vermont 05673

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

Free Vermont, and long live the UNtied States.
Dear Entergy Corporation,

A deal is a deal.

Under agreements entered into by you with the state of Vermont, the state has the legal and contractual right to determine whether Vermont Yankee should be permitted to operate beyond its originally prescribed term of operation.

It is therefore within our rights, as citizens of Vermont, acting through our elected representatives, to decide whether to shut down the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant or allow it to continue to operate within our state borders.

We, the People of Vermont, have the right to assess the risks and benefits exhibited by corporations with which we choose to do business.

And now, you, the Entergy Corporation of Louisiana, are suing every Vermonter, through your lawsuit against the state of Vermont, in order to reneg on your side of the deal.

Does this sound like the kind of corporate behavior Vermonters should support?

Here is the deal you and Vermont have previously agreed to in signed contracts:

You, the Entergy Corporation of Louisiana, received permission to:
1. Purchase Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant.
2. Run hotter at 120% above design capacity (550-660 MW).
3. Store spent fuel in dry cask canisters on-site.

In other words, bigger profits for you, Entergy, in exchange for the opportunity to expose Vermonters to increased risks.

In return, the State of Vermont received the right to permit or deny continued operation of the Entergy Corporation-owned Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant for 20 years beyond the original operating license.

Since that deal, you, Entergy, have proved yourself to be an unreliable and unsafe business partner.

Who would willingly do business with a corporation that violates the terms of contract?

The state of Vermont needs long-term economic stability. We Vermonters need to restore in-state energy production to levels that existed prior to the operation of a highly subsidized Vermont Yankee nuclear reactor, which has distorted the workings of our state and regional energy market and discouraged local energy production.

As we enter the 21st century, Vermont is again poised to redevelop our existing in-state, “small-is-beautiful” power source, along with appropriate development of distributed wind, solar, biogas and biomass energy systems. This will take capital investment, which can be encouraged and subsidized in a variety of ways. One method is by assessing and collecting “commons” rent on Vermont’s commonly owned natural resources, which are currently exploited and exported by out-of-state corporate entities without compensation to the citizens of Vermont (an annual value of $1.2 billion, as estimated by the University of Vermont’s Gund Institute.)

Alaska already does this. Vermont can do this, as well.

And then there is the question of jobs for Vermonters. Ample, better, and safer employment will exist for our 650 fellow citizens currently working at Vermont Yankee nuclear plant, not only in the decommissioning, cleanup and restoration of the site, but in the opportunities opened up by new local energy-focused capital investment programs all over Vermont.

Look at Maine. When Maine’s Yankee reactor was decommissioned on schedule, no jobs were lost, the state economy improved, and the grid was not impacted. Vermont Yankee is only 2% of the New England Grid’s capacity, and the New England Grid currently has more than a 20% surplus.

When considering your rhetorical and divisive scare tactics, we ask our fellow Vermonters to please remember to look at the history of other Yankee reactors.

Naturally, we understand that the prospect of closing Vermont Yankee is unwelcome to you. But we are sure you can also understand that world events have inspired renewed concern about the danger of aging nuclear reactors. So this is not about being for or against nuclear power. It’s about closing the last Yankee reactor in New England on schedule, which is in the interest of every Vermonter, our children, and beyond.

A deal is a deal.

Sincerely,

Vermont Commons: Voices of Independence editorial board

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Gaelan Brown; Fayston
Juliet Buck; South Burlington
Matthew Cropp, Burlington
Cheryl Diersch; Burlington
Rick Foley; Brattleboro
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