Greens are Anarchists, or Should Be

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The Unabomber claims to be both an anarchist and a radical environmentalist. This has prompted the media to start using the words *green*, *anarchist*, and *terrorist* in the same breath — a convenient way to discredit both anarchists and greens.

There *is* a necessary connection between anarchism and the green movement, but none between anarchism and terrorism. The image of anarchists as mad bombers was largely concocted by the press in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when the anarchist movement was gaining popularity among workers. As the capitalist elite began to worry about this development, the press "coincidentally" began a smear campaign against anarchists. Like today, there were a few bombing incidents by unbalanced people *calling* themselves anarchists, but most of the bombers had no clue about what anarchism really is. Some of the bombings were carried out or instigated by government agents provocateurs.

History has a habit of repeating itself, particularly when it's a question of stamping out unwanted leftist movements. So in this article I want to set the record straight by showing the actual relationship between anarchism and the green movement.

The Authoritarian Paradigm

The word "an-archy" means literally "without the principle of authority or rulership." This "principle (referred to hereafter as the "authoritarian paradigm") has been embodied in a number of different socioeconomic and political systems during the past 5,000 years or so, clothing itself at various times in theocratic, military-imperial, feudal, monarchical, liberal-capitalist, Fascist, and Communist forms. But the basic model of social organization is still authoritarian in all "civilized" societies, as shown by the fact that the major institutions of both capitalist and "communist" nations are in the form of *hierarchies*: oganizations that concentrate power and authority at the apex of a pyramidal structure — e.g. factories, corporations, government bureaucracies, armies, political parties, religious and educational establishments, etc.

Investigation of the hierarchical form shows that the two primary values it embodies are domination and exploitation, the latter being made possible by the former. For example, in his study of the organization of the modern factory, Steven Marglin (1974–75) found that the main function of its hierarchical form was not greater productive efficiency but greater control over workers, the purpose of such control being more effective exploitation.

Control in a hierarchy is accomplished by means of coercion — that is, by the use or threat of negative sanctions. Such control, including the repression of dissent and rebellion, therefore implies centralization: a set of power relations in which the greatest control, and hence the greatest power of sanctions, is exercised by the head (or heads) of the hierarchy, while those in the middle ranks have much less control and those at the bottom have virtually none.

Given these facts, it's fair to say that hierarchy is the institutional embodiment of the authoritarian paradigm. Today, after 5,000 years of "progress" under that paradigm, the result is a hierarchical world-system whose component nation-states have reached the highest level of centralization in history. Yet it's clear that this system has reached a point of potential self-destruction. The ongoing modern crises of social breakdown, ecological destruction, and proliferating weapons of mass destruction are convincing evidence that this is so.

The Green Movement

The green movement arose in West Germany during the early eighties, soon spreading to other European countries and then to the US. At first it was an informal network of people concerned with six major and closely related issues: ecology, peace, social justice, feminism, decentralization, and participatory democracy. In due time it became a political party (Die Grünen). However, as will be shown below, the agendas of these six green "consitituencies," both separately and together, imply anarchist socioeconomic and political principles. This conclusion suggests — although I won't argue it here — that a parliamentary party dedicated to achieving "green" objectives via the State is a contradiction in terms.

One might think that this claim would need no proof to members of a movement that advocates decentralization and participatory democracy — two key elements of anarchism. Unfortunately, however, this is not so. Many greens seem to be unaware that the principles they profess imply anarchism, as can be seen from the time and energy they've recently spent organizing a political party, engaging in electioneering, and developing statist legislative agendas.

The claim that the green movement is essentially anarchist rests on the argument that each of the six green constituencies needs to dismantle hierarchical (and therefore authoritarian) institutions in order to achieve its major aims. In the economic sphere, this argument implies the need for a decentralized, participatory-democratic, worker-controlled economy. Thus the shared need for workers' control — an objective that has always been the heart of anarchism — is the glue that unites all six constituencies of the green movement.

The argument that green = anarchist proceeds by examining the relations of mutual dependence that obtain between all possible pairs of green constituencies, starting with:

Feminism and Ecology

It's becoming clear to most people that environmental damage has reached alarming proportions. Many scientists now believe that there may be as little as 50 years to act before vital ecosystems are irreparably damaged. Without radical solutions now, the future of the human race, and perhaps of the biosphere itself, is in doubt.

A number of eco-feminist scholars have argued that the domination and exploitation of nature has paralleled the domination and exploitation of women, who have been identified with nature throughout history (Merchant 1980; Plumwood 1986). On this view, both women and nature are victims of the obsession with control that characterizes the authoritarian personality. Hence many ecologists and feminists recognize that the authoritarian paradigm must be dismantled in order to achieve their aims.

For feminists, this implies dismantling the hierarchical institutions in which the patriarchal-authoritarian values of domination and exploitation are embedded. Feminists, particularly eco-feminists and anarcha-feminists, often refer to this as the "feminization of society," since domination and exploitation are commonly regarded as "masculine" values. "Feminization," to them, thus means means replacing "masculine" values with those that are commonly regarded as "feminine:" e.g. cooperation, sharing, mutual aid, compassion, respect for nature, etc.[1]

[1] I don't know of any feminist who regards so-called "masculine" and "feminine" values/traits as biologically determined. Rather, they are regarded as being acquired by socialization in patricentric society.

That the main problems addressed by both feminists and ecologists are rooted in the authoritarian paradigm can perhaps best be seen from the economic standpoint. A number of ecologists have drawn attention to capitalism's built-in need for a consistently high rate of economic growth. Although rapid expansion is regarded as essential by virtually all mainstream economists and politicians, it's becoming clear that such expansion in a finite environment is leading to ecological catastrophe.

Therefore some ecologists have called for the development of a "steady-state economy": a system that is (a) based on alternative, environment-friendly technologies and recycled or renewable raw materials, and (b) not dependent on high levels of defense spending or rapid growth in order to avoid disastrous collapses. So far, however, most ecologists have focused entirely on (a), with little emphasis on the fact that pressure for rapid growth and military Keynesianism necessarily arises from the *predatory* nature of capitalism — i.e. from the competitive struggle between individual capitalist enterprises and between political aggregates of such enterprises (nation-states) pitted against each other for profits, market shares, raw materials, and cheap labor. The few ecologists who do recognize this fact would probably agree that a steady-state economy is impossible *in principle* unless the so-called "masculine" values of domination and exploitation are overthrown and supplanted by the so-called "feminine" values of cooperation, mutual aid, and an equitable sharing of the world's wealth. In other words, a steady-state economy implies "feminization."

This is an abstract way of showing the interdependence of feminism and the ecology movement. There is a more concrete way, however, which is based on the argument that both movements require workers' control to succeed.

Although most ecologists recognize the pernicious effects of the capitalist grow-or-die philosophy, most of them fail to make the connection between that philosophy and the *authoritarian form* of the typical capitalist corporation. This failure is odd, because there's a large body of evidence showing that worker-owned and self-managed firms — especially the type in which profits are shared equally among all full-time members — are under far less pressure toward rapid expansion than the traditional capitalist firm.

The slower growth rate of worker cooperatives has been documented by several scholars (e.g. Schweickhart 1980, 1993; Jackall and Levin 1984). Their studies have shown that in the traditional capitalist firm, owners' and executives' percentage share of profits greatly increases as more employees are added to the payroll, and this because the corporate hierarchy is designed to funnel the major portion of the "value added" from labor to those at the top of the pyramid. Such a design gives ownership and management a very strong incentive to expand, since, other things being equal (e.g. no recession), their standard of living rises with every new employee hired. Hence the authoritarian form of the corporation is one of the main causes of runaway growth.

By contrast, in an equal-share worker cooperative, the addition of more members simply means more people with whom the pie will have to be equally divided — a situation that greatly reduces the incentive to expand. For this reason, workers' control is one of the necessary ingredients of a steady-state economy, and therefore essential to the success of the ecology movement.

But workers' control is also implied by the concept of "feminizing" society. As noted, "feminization" refers to the subversion of the authoritarian paradigm, and thus to the dismantling of hierarchies. Economically, therefore, the feminist agenda implies a horizontally structured,

democratically run economic system to replace the current system of corporate hierarchies. Thus feminists and ecologists are linked through their shared need for workers' control.

Moreover, for obvious reasons feminism depends on the success of the ecology movement. If delicate ecosystems are irreparably damaged, thus rendering the planet unfit for human habitation, it will be meaningless to speak of the "success" of *any* social movement. In what follows, then, I'll assume that none of the other constituencies of the green movement can attain their respective aims unless ecologists attain theirs.

Feminism and Peace

The peace movement is another natural ally of feminism. This is because international disarmament, like the liberation of women, can never be attained without widespread rejection of the authoritarian paradigm, and specifically of its two central motive principles: domination and exploitation. For, when pursued along gender, class, racial, ethnic, or national lines, domination and exploitation produce resentment, hatred, and hostility which often explode into violence and armed conflict. Therefore peace depends on introducing into public policy "feminine" principles such as cooperation, sharing, conciliation, mediation, negotiation, reverence for life, etc. But this, of course, is "feminization." Consequently the peace movement cannot attain its major objective unless feminists attain theirs.

Conversely, the success of feminism depends on that of the peace movement. For there will be no "success" for anyone in an age of high-tech armaments if international peace efforts fail, weapons of mass destruction continue to spread, and the human race is eventually wiped out in a cataclysmic war. In what follows, then, I'll assume that the success of every constituency of the green movement presupposes that of the peace movement.

Feminism and Social Justice

Another ally of feminism is the social justice movement, which seeks fair and compassionate solutions to problems such as poverty, unemployment, economic exploitation, discrimination, poor housing, lack of health insurance, wealth and income inequalities, and the like.

That the major problems with which the social justice movement is concerned can be traced back to the authoritarian paradigm is not difficult to show. For, given the purpose of hierarchy, the highest priority of the ruling elite is necessarily to maintain its own power and privilege, regardless of the suffering involved for others. Today the US is reaping the grim harvest of its leaders' single-minded dedication to this priority: armies of the homeless wandering the streets; social welfare budgets slashed to the bone as poverty, unemployment, and underemployment grow; sweatshops mushrooming in the large metropoles; nearly 40 million Americans without basic health insurance; obscene wealth inequalities; and so on.

In short, social injustice is inherent in the dominative-exploitative functions of the State, which are made possible by the authoritarian form of State institutions and of the State-complex as a whole. Similarly, the authoritarian corporation gives rise to social injustice in the form of unfair income and wealth differentials between management and labor. Hence the success of the social justice movement, like that of the feminist movement, depends on dismantling the authoritarian paradigm in both its state and corporate embodiments. Which is to say that these two movements

are related in such a way that it's impossible to conceive of one of them achieving its goals in isolation from the other.

Ecology and Social Justice

The social justice movement, like feminism, is closely connected with the ecology movement through the shared need of each for workers' control.

The argument that social justice requires workers' control is simple: a worker-controlled economy would tend to produce a more equitable overall distribution of social wealth, which would help to eliminate poverty and its attendant evils. Studies of worker cooperatives have shown that they can provide more jobs, at the same level of capital investment, than traditional capitalist enterprises, which means that a worker-controlled economy would reduce unemployment (Levin 1984). Hence workers' control is as important for the social justice movement as it is for the ecology movement — a fact that links the two groups in such a way that it's impossible to conceive of either of them attaining their aims in isolation from the other.

Peace and Social Justice

We've already noted that world peace cannot be attained so long as the authoritarian paradigm, based on domination and exploitation, remains the basic model of social organization. But these same authoritarian values also underlie the State policies that produce poverty, inequality, discrimination, unemployment, and the many other problems that concern social-justice activists. Hence both peace and social justice depend on a dismantling of the authoritarian paradigm, particularly as manifested in corporate-State institutions.

This point can be made more concretely in terms of a specific social justice issue: labor rights. As Dimitrios Roussopoulos (1992) points out, the production of advanced weapons systems is highly profitable for capitalists, which is why more technologically complex and precise weapons keep getting built. Now, it's arguably a basic human right to be able to choose whether or not one will contribute to the production of technologies that could lead to the extinction of the human race. Yet because of the authoritarian form of the corporation, rank and file workers have virtually no say in whether their companies will produce such technologies. Hence the only way they can obtain this right is to control the production process themselves, through self-management. For these reasons, the peace and social justice movements, like the other movements we've examined, are linked through their shared need for worker's control.

Participatory Democracy and Decentralization

Participatory democrats advocate horizontally structured political organizations instead of the hierarchies of "representative" democracy. They maintian that the latter is not working, first because so-called representatives often use their power to enrich themselves, and second because they're disproportionately influenced by wealthy business interests. Hence participatory democrats favor local, grassroots organizations (e.g. citizens' committees, popular assemblies, civic action groups, etc.), the use of initiatives and referenda, and a return to town-meeting style politics. They also support reforms to take the money out of politics, restrict lobbying, etc. in or-

der to lessen the undue influence of wealthy special interests. And most advocates of workplace democracy want it to be participatory rather representative.

Decentralists emphasize the need to dissolve monolithic institutions into smaller, more horizontally structured bodies. They point out that huge bureaucracies tend to be unwieldy, out of touch with local problems, dehumanizing, self-serving, self-perpetuating, and antidemocratic. Hence they wish to disband federal bureaucracies and give more responsibility to state and local agencies; divide up large and artificial administrative units (like nation-states) into natural bioregions defined by shared geographical and ecological features; curb the power of multinational corporations in favor of more self-sufficient, smaller-scale local enterprises, and so on.

Obviously there's a close relationship between decentralization and participatory democracy. Participatory democracy works best (and perhaps only) in relatively small-scale, decentralized organizations and administrative units (Balbus 1982, Ch. 10); moreover the very concept of decentralization implies the diffusion of power represented by participatory democracy. Thus communities and organizations based on participatory-democratic principles set their basic policies by voting at popular assemblies, renouncing a hierarchical structure and allowing everyone access to all officials. And in large (e.g. regional) organizations where mass participation is difficult or impossible, participatory democrats favor the election of temporary, instantly recallable, and unpaid delegates rather than professional representatives.

So participatory democracy and decentralization mutually imply each other, which means that neither is workable or even understandable apart from the other.

Feminism, Decentralization, and Participatory Democracy

The key feminist goal of feminizing society cannot be attained without both decentralization and participatory democracy. This is because the patriarchal values and traditions that feminists seek to overthrow are embodied and reproduced in authoritarian hierarchies. This implies that feminists must be decentralists, which in turn implies that they must be participatory democrats as well. Many feminists have recognized this, as reflected in their experiments with collective forms of feminist organizations that eliminate hierarchical structure and competitive forms of decision making. Some feminists have even argued that participatory-democratic organizations are specifically female political forms (Hartsock 1979: 56–77).

Conversely, the success of both participatory democrats and decentralists depends on the success of feminism. The US, despite the rhetoric about its alleged "democracy," remains only superficially democratic. The majority of Americans spend about half their waking hours under the thumb of capitalist dictators (bosses) who allow them no voice in the crucial economic decisions that affect their lives most profoundly. In this situation, the psychological traits deemed most desirable for average citizens to possess are efficiency, conformity, emotional detachment, insensitivity, and unquestioning obedience to authority — traits that allow people to survive and even prosper as employees in corporate hierarchies.

But it is qualities like flexibility, creativity, sensitivity, understanding, emotional honesty, directness, warmth, realism, and the ability to mediate, communicate, negotiate, integrate, and cooperate which are most essential for true democracy to work. These, however, are commonly regarded as "feminine" qualities, which feminists seek to infuse into society's institutions. Thus the success of both participatory democrats and decentralists depends on the "feminization of so-

ciety," which would give the majority of citizens the psychological qualities necessary to maintain a decentralized, participatory-democratic political system.

Ecology and Decentralization

We've noted that decentralists aim at dissolving monolithic bureaucratic hierarchies. Because administrators who occupy the top positions in government bureaucracies are especially susceptible to the influence of environmentally irresponsible special interests, such bureaucracies are one of the main hindrances to the success of the ecology movement. There's a similar problem with highly centralized multinational corporations, which owe their allegiance only to corporate headquarters and thus tend to be less responsive to local environmental concerns than smaller-scale, indigenous enterprises. Therefore the achievement of ecological aims presupposes both political and economic decentralization.

In addition, the alternative technologies advocated by ecologists are small in scale and thus incompatible with large-scale societies and the politico-economic centralization that accompanies them. For example, solar devices, wind turbines, tidal generators, and heat pumps (so-called "soft energy paths") produce relatively small quantities of electricity, and scientists are not able to predict when, or even if, such technologies would ever be able to produce enough current to power large megapolises such as New York or Tokyo (Balbus 1981: 372). Organic methods of agriculture similarly work best in small-scale operations. Hence the arguments of ecologists for alternative technologies make sense only in the context of a fundamentally decentralized society in which urban communities are reduced in size and widely dispersed over the land (Bookchin 1971: 74–75).

Ecology and Participatory Democracy

Saving the biosphere will require that ordinary citizens be able to take part at the grassroots level in decisions that affect their environment. This is because such citizens are more likely to favor stringent environmental safeguards than are the large, polluting special interests that now dominate the representative system of government. Thus a solution to the ecological crisis presupposes participatory democracy in the political sphere.

However, this goal can't be achieved by working within the representative political system. For that system, by its hierarchical nature, not only precludes mass participation in political decision making but also necessarily functions to perpetuate itself. This is why Bakunin continually emphasized that the "social revolution" must *precede* the "political revolution" (see Dolgoff 1980). But for anarchists like Bakunin, "the social revolution" means *workers' control*. It makes sense to say that workers' control must come first, for as we've seen, daily experience of participatory-democracy in the workplace is needed to give ordinary citizens the psychological qualities required to maintain a genuinely democratic political order.

So participatory-democratic restructuring of the political system presupposes workers' control. But, as shown earlier, the success of the ecology movement also presupposes workers' control. Hence ecologists and participatory democrats are linked through their shared need for workers' control.

Peace, Participatory Democracy, and Decentralization

We've seen that the possibility of peace depends on the permeation of nonauthoritarian ("feminine") values into society's institutions. Practically speaking, however, this permeation can only occur if (a) a majority of people have a nonauthoritarian type of personality, and (b) the influence of nonauthoritarian types on public policy is proportional to their actual numbers in the general population.

Now, condition (a) is already fulfilled: that is, most people already have an essentially nonauthoritarian personality, which is to say that traits such as cooperation and mutual aid are stronger than dominative-exploitative traits. The latter are most important for success as a capitalist manager, politician, or military leader, and hence are most strongly developed in the relatively small capitalist class and its politico-military and police entourage. In contrast, nonauthoritarian traits are essential for success as an employee, and hence are most strongly developed among the working class. Therefore, since the majority of people are employees rather than capitalists, most people already have an essentially nonauthoritarian personality.

Condition (b), however — the requirement that nonauthoritarian types exert a proporitional influence on policy — is not fulfilled. For the current political system is hierarchical, which is to say that discrimination against nonauthoritarian types is built into it. For authoritarian traits are required to advance to top of any hierarchy, where the real power and influence lies. This fact insures that nonauthoritarian types will have very little influence on public policy.

A decentralized, participatory-democratic political system would remedy this situation, by allowing for the proportional influence of nonauthoritarian types, thus eliminating domination and exploitation as the main motive principles underlying public policy. And since the possibility of peace depends on this kind of restructuring, it follows that the success of the peace movement presupposes the success of both the participatory democracy and decentralization movements.

Social Justice, Participatory Democracy, and Decentralization

Social justice, like peace, is only conceivable on the hypothesis that all major institutions become permeated by nonauthoritarian values. For only then could social policies be shaped according to the principles of equality, fairness, and nonexploitation. But, as just shown, such a permeation depends on participatory democracy and decentralization, which are therefore also necessary for the social justice movement to succeed.

Conversely, decentralization and participatory democracy cannot take place unless society becomes more just. For as things now stand, members of the ruling elite resist decentralization and participatory democracy because they know that these developments would put an end to their own privileged positions. Yet those privileged positions, *which in themselves constitute social injustice*, are what enables this elite to resist the efforts of decentralists and participatory democrats. In other words, social justice and decentralization/participatory democracy are two sides of the same coin, so that neither is conceivable by itself.

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The foregoing discussion shows that the concept of *interdependence* is relevant not just in describing ecological relationships but also the relationships between each of the six constituen-

cies of the green movement. As these constituencies come to a deeper realization of their mutual dependence, they should be able to work more effectively together toward their common goal: dismantling hierarchies and creating a horizontally structured, green anarchist society in its place.

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