

## **The Greens: “Neither Left nor Right”?**

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Green Parties were founded all across the industrialized world during the 1980s. But after twenty-five years of running in elections, and participating in several coalition governments, the electoral support for almost all of them has stagnated at between 5% and 10%. There is no country where the Greens have made an electoral breakthrough, not even in Germany, where they were from the beginning the most successful party. Why is this the case?

The early Green parties were ecology parties with a strong commitment to social justice, opposition to militarism, war and violence, and participatory democracy. Since the early 1990s most of the parties have become more moderate in their policy orientation and have embraced the reformism of environmentalism. The trend in all the parties is away from the original Green model of participatory democracy and towards the top down hierarchical model of the traditional parliamentary political party. The early strong commitment to women’s liberation has faded. If the Greens are now positioning themselves to be just another middle of the road party, what is their future? As the large mainstream political parties have now all embraced some degree of environmentalism, what is their purpose?

At the present time the world is faced with a number of very serious ecological, political and economic problems. The new system of neoliberalism is producing greater inequalities in income and wealth between the industrialized and less developed countries and within all countries. The prospect of peak oil threatens the present capitalist system of production and consumption, which is highly energy-intensive. Then there is the enormous threat posed by global warming and climate change. In a world where U.S. imperial policy is fostering a new kind of resistance, western governments are moving to greatly curtail traditional liberal and human rights. Now, more than ever, the countries of the industrialized world need a political movement that seriously questions the political status quo and business as usual and proposes a clear alternative. The Greens as they were structured in the early 1980s could have filled that role. But where are they today?

The first Green Parties developed in New Zealand, Tasmania, and Switzerland in 1972, followed by the Ecology Party in Great Britain in 1973. In France the Green party movement was launched in 1974 when Rene Dumont ran for president. These were parties which focused on environmental issues. But the rapid expansion of Green parties across the industrialized world did not occur until the founding and the early success of the Green Party in West Germany. It served as the model for most of those which followed.

The development of the new Green parties was built on the New Politics that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s across Europe and the United States. This included the student protests, the opposition to the war in Vietnam, the opposition to nuclear weapons and nuclear power, support for Third World liberation, the women’s movement, demands for individual rights and opposition to racism, and the grass roots environmental movement.

This general protest was combined with a call for a new democracy. There was popular opposition to the hierarchical, bureaucratic political party system. This included the social

democratic and labour parties who were quite hostile to the New Left issues. One of the earliest political developments was the formation of a number of new left wing parties in Europe, all of whom called for an end to the Cold War and militarism. These new parties encompassed a Marxist and socialist alternative, one which opposed the Soviet model. The Green movement which started in West Germany brought these forces together in a new alliance, an attempt to combine extra-parliamentary opposition with electoral politics.

### **The German Greens**

In West Germany the broad new politics movement was very strong. There was an extensive anti-nuclear movement, both against weapons and nuclear power. Mass demonstrations were held across the country. There was widespread concern over environmental degradation. Horst Mewes estimates that by 1979 there were around 50,000 local environmental organizations, and their membership rivaled the membership of the registered political parties, around 1.6 million. The peak in demonstrations occurred in 1983 when 9,200 were recorded. (Dyrzek et al, 2003; Hewes, 1998)

However, these mass demonstrations had little effect on the three major political parties or government policy. They were not impressed by the extra-parliamentary opposition. In the late 1970s these various groups began to band together to form alliances to enter electoral politics. They entered this political arena by creating electoral lists, alliances of the various popular groups, including socialist and Marxist political formations. Alternative Lists were formed in Bremen, Hamburg and Berlin, all with a strong left wing and ecological orientation. In the more southern and conservative areas, the new Greens had a more conservative, environmentalist orientation.

One of the central figures in the Green movement at this time was Rudolph Bahro, who had fled East Germany in 1979. His goal was to forge an alliance between ecology and Marxism. Meetings were held in 1979, with the discussions culminating at Kassel in May 1980 where 1,200 socialists met to see if they could create a new party. No consensus was reached. But over 1979 and early 1980, other meetings led to the formation of The Greens. It was agreed that the new party would be open to Marxists and other radical groups. The conservative supporters of Herbert Gruhl, who had been a CDU member of parliament, quit the party, objecting to its leftist orientation and support for feminism. The March 1980 policy conference at Saarbrücken adopted a rainbow strategy, reflecting its mass movement base, and established the Four Pillars of the international Green movement: ecological wisdom, grass roots democracy, social justice, and peace and non-violence. (Capra and Spretnak, 1984; Frankland, 1995; Hewes, 1998; Hulsberg, 1988; O'Neill, 1997)

The first test for the new Green Party was the election for the European Parliament in 1979. The Alternative Political Alliance (the Green list) received 3% of the vote and obtained state funding of DM4.5 million. In the federal election of March 1983 the Greens received 5.6% of the vote. Since they were above the 5% threshold under West Germany's system of proportional representation, they received 27 seats from their party list and additional funding. In 1984 they received 8.2% of the vote in the European elections. In the elections at the Land (or state) level, they began to receive between 5% and 10% of the vote. In the federal election of 1987 they received 8.3% of the vote and 42 seats in the Bundestag. It seemed like the Greens were making the first change in West German politics since the end of World War II. (O'Neill, 1997; Poguntke, 1993)

At the same time, Green parties were being formed in every country across Europe. The

model was the German Greens. Furthermore, most of the independent leftists parties, and then the reformed Communist parties after 1989, adopted an ecological orientation and became “Green Left” parties. In the European Parliament the Green parties worked together with the independent left parties in a “Rainbow” coalition. There was also the Green Alternative European Link, a confederation which tied the formal Green parties with the new left and radical parties. (Carter, 1999; Ely, 1998; Foyt, 1989; Kitschelt, 1993; O’Neill, 1997; Scharf, 1994)

### **Original Green Platform**

The basic policy of the Greens was set at the March 1980 national conference. The *1980 Federal Program* was only slightly modified until the 1990s. In general, it established the party as a left Green party, calling for an ecological and social transformation of society.

The Greens began their program with an analysis of the capitalist system: the requirement of capital accumulation and continued growth, the destruction of the environment which this entails, the creation of super consumerism, the exploitation of labour, the creation of inequality of wealth, income and status, and the exploitation of the Third World. The project of the Greens was to replace this system with a just and democratic system which respected the environment and other species.

Thus the Greens called for women’s liberation, the reduction of the work week for all, a guaranteed annual income, and progressive taxation of income and wealth. An active state was necessary to curb the power of capital and the large corporations; the goal would be workers’ ownership and control of business and industry. Full employment would be created by a redistribution of work and cutting the work week, stressing co-operation and solidarity. The expansion of democracy, and active participation, would be central to this necessary transformation. Decentralization was stressed, and at the local level economic development would be subject to economic planning, involving social and economic councils, with broad popular involvement. No longer would economic development be determined by the need of capital to maximize profits. Through the elimination of waste in production, and the elimination of the vast spending on militarism, there would be no need to increase taxes.

The Greens were also committed to a politics of peace. They opposed NATO, military alliances, West German re-militarization, nuclear weapons, and the stationing of NATO forces on West German territory. They strongly supported using the United Nations as the instrument for resolving international disputes. The Greens called for a major redistribution of wealth and income between the First and the Third World. The goal was to create a Germany with a self reliant economy, an internal economy which would not exploit less developed countries.

This policy direction placed the Greens well to the left of the Social Democratic Party (SPD). But there was also a very strong rejection of the Soviet system, seen as a bureaucratic, totalitarian structure, hostile to democratic and individual rights. The Greens were adamantly opposed to the Soviet system of nationalization, which resulted in a centralized, hierarchical and authoritarian institutions and society. Instead, they called for expanding “community property” under democratic control at the local level, and a work system which stressed self management. The society that they envisioned was much like the Paris Commune.

This is what the original West German Greens meant when they proclaimed that they were “Neither left nor right – but ahead.” The Greens rejected both capitalism and the existing alternative, the Soviet model of “actual existing socialism.” The Greens would move beyond these two outmoded systems and create a new society, a new “Third Way.” (Capra and Spretnak, 1984; Doherty, 2002; Hulsberg, 1988; Kitschelt, 1989; Poguntke, 1993; Shull, 1999;

Talshir, 2003)

The overall view of the West German Green goal was summarized by Petra Kelly, the most widely known Green activist and prominent member of the radical ecology faction:

“The environment, peace, society and economy now pose such a threat to human survival that they can only be resolved by structural change, not by crisis management and cosmetic adjustments. The Greens can make no compromises on the fundamental questions of the environment, peace, sexual equality and the economy.” (Kelly, 1984: 18)

### **The structure of the party**

The Greens were created by people who had been activists in the 1960s and 1970s in the many popular organizations and New Left formations. They were highly critical of the authoritarian and bureaucratic structure of the mainstream parties. While many were sympathetic to the policies of the social democratic SPD, they were appalled by its oligarchical structure and authoritarian practices. A number of political commentators and academics have attributed the rise of the New Left parties and the Greens to the refusal of the social democratic and labour parties to accept any of the major policy proposals of the New Politics movement.

These activists had a strong commitment to participatory democracy, and they were determined to create a new type of political party, one which was controlled by grass roots organizations and run from the bottom up. The structure of the original West German Green Party incorporated these goals.

First, Germany is a federal state. The Green Party is a confederation of state (Land) parties, as is the case of the Green parties in the United States, Australia, Austria, Switzerland and originally in Canada.. Party electoral lists were therefore created at the land level, not by a centralized party.

The constitution of the Green Party incorporated “*Basisdemokratie*.” The party structure was to be a model for society as a whole. Decentralization was the ideal, and party decisions should be made at the lowest and broadest political level. The grass roots party was to have control over all office holders, all decision making should be open to the public, and recall of elected members should be available at all times. One of the central goals was to prevent the rise of individual party leaders, small cliques of dominating individuals, and the development of a professional party elite.

Party conventions were to be held at least once every year. Those who attended were selected by the local districts, and they were delegates, not representatives. Special party conferences could be called by 10% of the existing electoral district organizations. Policy motions could be introduced at conferences when supported by 20 members. All budget decisions were made at party congresses. But there were other key concepts embedded in the party constitution:

**Collective leadership.** The party as a whole operated with an eight-member federal steering committee with no individual officers but with three elected “speakers.” In the parliament there was an executive committee which included three speakers who had equal rights. The states also had steering committees, elected by the statewide assembly, which met twice a year.

**Gender parity.** At all levels of the party gender parity was required. Women automatically were granted 50% of the votes. Women were granted veto power over issues which were considered to

be especially relevant to women. Women were guaranteed 50% of all paid party positions. After the 1987 election, the number of women in the Bundestag outnumbered men (25 to 19), and all three of the speakers elected were women.

**Women's groups.** There was a formal women's group within the parliamentary caucus and at various levels of the party in general. There were also women's Working Groups.

**Separation of party and elected office.** Those who were elected to office could not hold any elected office in the party structure.

**Limits to office.** No member of the party could serve more than four years on the federal executive.

**Rotation of office holders.** Under the original constitution, Green members of parliament had to resign their positions after two years. They were replaced for the remaining two years of their term by their parliamentary assistants.

**Parliamentary compensation.** Green members of parliament were to retain only that share of their salary that was equal to the average wage of a skilled worker. The remainder of the salary was to be given to the party.

**Imperative mandate.** Members of parliament were bound to support policy positions which were adopted by the party national conference and decisions from the federal council.

**Links to extra-parliamentary groups.** In contrast to other parties, members of social and community groups could participate in local Green party activities without being members. Non members were also encouraged to participate in local working groups. The Greens were to be a party which "walked on two legs," one leg in the legislative body and one leg in the popular movements.

**Conference democracy.** The agenda was set by the meeting. Speakers lists at all party conferences were chosen by lottery. This was designed to limit the influence of prominent party members and members elected to legislatures.

**Working groups.** These formations within the party had full autonomy and were charged with proposing policy positions to party conferences.

**Green Foundation, *Okofond*.** The Green Party operated a foundation, financed by a share of the membership fees and the share of the salary of elected members. This fund was used to give financial assistance to grass roots activities outside the Green Party, a support for movement politics. (Capra and Spretnak, 1984; Demirovic, 1998; Kolensky, 1989; O'Neill, 1997; Poguntke, 1993)

### **Who are the Greens?**

It is widely believed that activists with the Green parties everywhere are upper middle class people. It is generally recognized that the Green activists are more likely to be younger,

have a higher level of education with a fairly strong representation of students, and to have a higher representation of women. Was this the case of the German Greens? Has this changed over the years?

A number of surveys have been made. Thomas Poguntke conducted a survey of delegates to the national Green Party congress in December 1985. Compared to the general electorate, these delegates had a higher percentage of self employed professionals, a higher level who were employees in the public service and a higher percentage who were unemployed. While those attending the convention reported middle class incomes, the party had a relatively high percentage who were in the low income brackets. This was attributed to the fact that they were younger than the average population, but also because they were more likely to be in jobs with "precarious work." Two-thirds of the delegates were under 35 years of age. (Poguntke, 1993)

There were other characteristics which set the Green activists off from those in the other parties. Over 46% said they had no religious affiliation. A remarkable 89% said they were not satisfied with the German system of democracy. Only 6.5% said that they disagreed with the position that "income differences should be minimized." The delegates reported that they were active in ecology, anti-nuclear and peace organizations.

When West German Green Party delegates were asked where they would put themselves on the left v. right political spectrum, over 40% said there were on the Extreme Left (Marxist and socialist) another 40% said they were Left (SPD - social democratic). Only 10% identified with the Centre (FDP - liberal) and just over one percent with the Right (CDU/CSU - conservative) or the Extreme Right (National Democrats).

As Poguntke concludes, the results of his survey "shows that the Greens are clearly the most left-wing Bundestag party." The Greens were also different from the other parties in that they had by far the highest percentage of women in the legislatures and in party leadership roles. Poguntke also found that "female activists are more left wing on average" within the Green Party. (Poguntke, 1993: 96-7)

A number of surveys have shown that the electorate of the Green Party were very similar to the party activists. Those who voted for the Greens were more likely to be young. They received a higher percentage of votes from women. They had a strong base among those in white collar jobs which paid a wage or a salary. Around one-third of all Green supporters were members of trade unions, below that of the supporters of the SPD but far ahead of the supporters of the FDP and the CDU. They received a much higher percentage of support from students and by far the lowest support among older and retired voters. Of all the parties, the Greens received the highest support from people with no income or very low income. Their vote support was highest in the larger cities. The Allbus survey of German public opinion in 1990 showed that the Green electorate received the highest support from people who identified themselves as "extreme left." A total of 49% of supporters of the Greens considered themselves to be "left," slightly higher than those who supported the SPD. The Allbus and Eurobarometer surveys showed that Green voters had a high concern for social justice issues like distribution of wealth, income and employment opportunities. Green voters also expressed the highest support for minority rights and rights for homosexuals. (Mez, 1998; Poguntke, 1993)

### **The evolution of the German Green Party**

The German Green Party was widely known for its vigorous internal debate between different ideological factions. But there are major ideological divisions in all of the Green parties. In many countries this has led to splits and the formation of two or more Green parties.

In a broad sense, the division has been between those who are committed ecologists and those who want to pursue an agenda of environmental reform. Division developed between those who want to stress links to the popular groups and those who want to focus almost entirely on parliamentary politics. A third major division has been whether the Green representation in legislatures should remain critics of the present political-economic system or should join with other leftist parties in coalition governments.

In general, the media focused on the conflict in the German Greens between the “fundamentalists” (*fundis*) and the “realists” (*realos*). But there were a number of major factions or currents in the party. The original *fundis* included the eco-socialists, the Marxists and socialists who insisted that the capitalist system would destroy the world as we know it and had to be replaced. They were joined by the radical ecologists, who also believed that the capitalist system had to be replaced but rejected socialism. The *realos* were the strongest group within the party, calling for an emphasis on the parliamentary party and cutting links with the popular movement. They were joined by the eco-libertarians, environmentalists who placed the blame for ecological destruction on industrialization itself and rejected egalitarianism and the general socialist agenda. There was also a women’s caucus, with a strong feminist orientation, which was usually linked with the *fundis* coalition. Despite these divisions, delegates to Green conventions were able to put together a common platform. With strong support for the Four Pillars, there was a broad consensus on the general policy direction. By 1983 the central debate within the Greens was whether or not to form a coalition government or alliance with the social democrats, the SPD. (O’Neill, 1994; Poguntke, 1993; Roth and Murphy, 1998; Shull, 1999)

There is no space here to retrace the evolution of the German Greens. It is useful to remember that the early successes of the Greens came while Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan were leading the drive for neoliberalism and globalization. The 1980s saw the decline of mass movement politics, and of course, the collapse of the Soviet system beginning in 1989. The prospects of a re-united Germany boosted nationalism, encouraged the move to the right, and generally undermined the left and the Greens.

Most studies of the German Greens conclude that the *fundis* dominated the party from 1980 to the Karlsruhe convention in December 1988. The peak of the dominance of the this broad left was at the Duisberg convention in 1987. The *realos* were boosted by the growth and influence of the parliamentary party. With public funds for party caucuses, they had a significant power base of members of the Bundestag, the parliamentary assistants, and a large paid staff. By 1987 this number was around 200. There was a continual conflict between the parliamentary caucus and the grass roots of the party over policy and strategy. The grass roots organizations generally held to the left and resisted the move towards traditional parliamentary politics. But the party membership majority was handicapped, with only the small federal executive committee, with a staff of 27, to advance its case. (Kitschelt, 1989; Poguntke, 1993)

Numerous public opinion polls showed that the electorate which supported the Greens wanted them to take a reformist road and join in coalition governments with the SPD. Furthermore, Greens at the local and Land level were moving to form coalitions with the SPD. In Hesse in 1985 the Greens formed a coalition government with the SPD, and Joschka Fisher, one of the best known leaders of the *realos*, became the first Green cabinet minister. In 1988 a group of Green activists formed Green Awakening ‘88, a new caucus of the independent centre; over the period of struggle between 1989 and 1991, they generally aligned themselves with the *realos* to defeat the ecological left.

In general, the party was hindered by the fact that it had relatively few members

compared to its electoral support, only around 40,000. This was because most Green supporters made their first priority a commitment to their extra-parliamentary organizations. In 1990 party members held 7,000 elected positions at the local level. The parliamentary group often complained that it did not get enough direction from the grass roots organizations. (Mayer and Ely, 1998; Mewes, 1998; Poguntke, 1993)

As the *realos* began to take control of the Greens, many of the fundamentalists quit the party. After the conference at Kahrushe in 1988, many of the Marxists and socialists left to join other political movements. After the fall of the Eastern Bloc, and the re-unification of Germany, others left to join the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the now reformed former Communist Party. Before reunification, the Communist Party (PKD) was banned in West Germany.

The women's caucus was not immune to ideological division. In 1987 a group of women in the Greens issued the "Mother's Manifesto" which criticized feminists for their focus on gaining women's independence, the right to work and the right to abortion. The new group argued that the Greens were overlooking women who chose to get married and have children, a key part of the "female life course." With the support of men, this group formed a new working group within the Greens. Post-feminism then became the ideology of the *realos* and their allies, Green Awakening '88. This new conservative women's position also became the orientation of the Green parliamentary group. Feminism retained its major support at the grass roots and at the party congresses. Many feminist activists quit the party and returned to work in women's organizations. (Kolensky, 1989; Mayer and Ely, 1998; Pine, 1998)

Most of the radical ecologists also quit the party. Their leading spokesperson was Jutta Ditfurth, who was a strong critic of political reformism. She called on the Greens to resist joining those parties supporting the repressive German state and turning the party into another middle-of-the-road liberal party. Instead she called for the creation of "concrete utopias", like the actual elimination of poverty and making cities free of automobile transportation. She led a group out of the Greens to form the Ecological Left/Alternative List, a grouping committed to extra-parliamentary opposition. (O'Neill, 1997)

In 1989 Joschka Fisher published a book in which he declared that "capitalism has won, and socialism has lost." Thus the only direction for the Greens was environmental reform of the western system of capitalism. This contrasted with Jutta Ditfurth, the ecologist, who insisted that the Greens must work for a transformation of capitalism, a radical break from this system. "Every variant of reformism has proven itself historically bankrupt," she insisted. (O'Neill, 1997; 59; Roth and Murphy, 1998: 59)

### **Coalitions with the SPD**

The Greens went through a major crisis between 1989 and 1991. The *realos*, in alliance with the Green Awakening 88 caucus, took control of the party. The collapse of the Soviet bloc beginning in 1989 reduced the public's concern over nuclear weapons and military alliances. In the 1990 federal election the question of reunification was central. The Greens supported the creation of a two-state confederation, so that East Germany would not simply be swallowed up by the larger and more powerful West Germany. In respect for the autonomy of the East German Greens (Alliance 90), they maintained separate parties and ran separate slates. The West German Greens failed to get 5% of the vote and lost all of their seats in the Bundestag; Alliance 90 won 6.5% of the vote in East Germany and received eight seats. This period consolidated the domination of the party by the *realos*, with much of the ecological left and socialists leaving the

party.

The Greens recovered and began to win elections and participate in governments with the SPD. But by 1998 they had lost support in former East Germany to the PDS and no longer had representation in any of the five state legislatures there.

The Greens were divided on a number of issues which challenged their original commitment to anti-militarism. The first was whether to support U.S. policy promoting the break up of Yugoslavia, started by Ronald Reagan in 1984. The Greens in the parliamentary caucus, following German Conservatives and the Church in Rome, supported the independence of Slovenia and Croatia. Traditional Green Party policy was again repudiated when the Green leadership supported the allocation of German troops to NATO engagements, including Bosnia and Kosovo. The Greens across Europe strongly opposed the U.S. Gulf war in 1991, but many in the German leadership argued for support of U.S. policy goals. In 1995 Joschka Fisher, the defacto leader of the Greens, issued a policy paper recommending that the party ditch its tradition of anti-militarism and support German intervention in Bosnia as part of NATO's policy. (O'Neill, 1997; Rudig, 2002)

Following the federal election of 1998, the Greens entered into a coalition government with the SPD. Fisher became foreign minister and immediately faced the issue of NATO bombing in Yugoslavia. The massive attack, which began in March, went on for 78 days, with targets including infrastructure and economic establishments. An estimated 10,000 civilians were killed. The German Greens, and Greens across Europe and elsewhere, were strongly opposed to this war and the bombing. But Fisher and the "super-reals" in the Bundestag backed the decision by the SPD to provide direct support of the U.S. war effort. The question of NATO air strikes split the party, but the parliamentary caucus, including the left, backed Gerhard Schroeder in his support of U.S.-NATO war policy. In November 2001 the SPD-GP coalition government also strongly supported the US-UK attack on Afghanistan; again, the German Greens broke with the international Green movement and German public opinion. In the Bundestag, only four Green members voted against the coalition policy. (Doherty, 2002; Markovits and Silvia, 1999; Rudig, 2002)

Participation in the Red-Green alliance government was not particularly good for the Greens. Between 1998 and 2002 the Greens "lost" twenty elections: in each case their vote dropped below what they had achieved in the previous election. In most of these cases they were linked to electoral defeats suffered by the SPD. After April 1998 the Greens found themselves with no seats in any of the five legislatures in former East Germany; there was a shift in support from the Greens to the PDS, even among the youth. In 2001 public opinion polls showed a majority of the electorate believed that the Greens should withdraw from the coalition with the SPD. (Bluhdorn, 2004; Markovits and Silvia, 1999; Sloam, 2006)

### **German Greens formally change political direction**

In 1999 the leadership of the Greens launched a formal review of the policies and political direction of the party. This came just as Tony Blair and Gerhard Schroeder were launching their paper on the Third Way, calling for "modernization" reforms in the system of social security and welfare and the labour market. This signaled their acceptance of the project of big business, "globalization" and neoliberalism. The Green Manifesto adopted in 2002, *Grundsatz 2020*, was a clear break with the Green manifesto of 1980, the *Bundesprogramm* and the original political path. Gone was the critique of capitalism, the opposition to militarism, and commitment to participatory democracy. The German Greens made a complete break with the

anti-globalization movement. Modernization meant a reversal of the party's left tradition of defence of the welfare state and trade union rights. Ecology was all but ignored in the new political declaration, as the New Greens opted for environmental reformism within the market economy. (Bluhdorn, 2004; Talshir, 2003)

It should be noted that the Green's electoral support was increased and stabilized by the electoral alliance with the SPD. Under the German system of proportional representation, each voter has two votes, one ballot for the local constituency and one ballot for the federal list of parties. Many left wing supporters of the SPD engaged in strategic voting. They voted for the SPD at the constituency level and then for the Greens on the federal list. Voters knew that neither the SPD nor the CDU would get a majority of the votes. Those on the left wanted the SPD to form an alliance with the Greens, which were considered to be to the left of the SPD. In 2002, for example, the Greens received 1.4 million more votes from the party lists than they did from the constituency vote. The SPD received 1.5 million more votes at the constituency level than they did from the federal list. In the 2005 federal election, the Greens received about 1.3 million party list votes from SPD voters, raising their percentage of total votes from 5.4% to 8.1%. (Adams et al, 2006; Bluhdorn, 2004)

While participating in the federal government headed by Gerhard Schroeder, the Greens in the Bundestag became major supporters of the move to the right on economic policy, embracing neoliberalism, cutting of the welfare state, and repealing many historic trade union rights. During the first term of the coalition (1998-2002), the Red-Green government, as it was called, began introducing a series of neoliberal reforms. Under pressure from the Greens, they introduced eco-taxes on energy use, which were generally regressive; the revenue from these taxes was used to lower employer contributions to health insurance and social security. (Doherty, 2002; Huber, 2004; Lees, 2000; Padgett, 2003)

The Greens and the SPD were facing defeat in the 2002 elections, falling well behind the CDU in the polls. But the opposition CDU gave them a way out by strongly supporting U.S. President George Bush's war on Afghanistan and the proposed invasion of Iraq. While the Red-Green government had endorsed the US-UK attack on Afghanistan, they shifted direction and took a strong stand against a war in Iraq. This was the overwhelmingly position of German public opinion, and it was enough to turn the tide and secure their re-election.

But little else changed. The move to the right continued during the second term of the coalition. In 2003 they launched Agenda 2010. These included reductions in income taxes, cuts in pensions, reductions in unemployment insurance benefits, and cuts to corporate taxes. This was followed by the Hartz "reforms" to workers and trade union rights, pushed hard by big business. For example, the unemployed were now required to accept any job, regardless of professional training, even if it paid subsistence wages. The leadership of the Green Party won an internal battle with the left on these issues. They chose to ignore mass demonstrations by workers and the poor who were demanding the continuation of the Keynesian welfare state. The popular support for the coalition government fell to all time lows, and both the SPD and the Greens suffered losses in regional elections. (Bluhdorn, 2004; Padgett, 2003; Sloam, 2006)

Schroeder faced strong criticism within his own party. The trade unions were up in arms. Schroeder had removed Oskar Lafontaine from Finance Minister when he insisted on defending the welfare rate, and he resigned from the party. The popular head of the trade union movement helped launch a new party formation, Alternative for Work and Social Justice (WAAG) in January 2005. They joined with the PDS in April to form the new Left Party (*Linkspartei*) with a program to defend and expand the Keynesian welfare state. Schroeder, with the support of

Joschka Fisher and the Greens, introduced a motion of non confidence in themselves, voted against their own government, and forced an early election.

The two mainstream parties both lost in the 2005 election, with the vote for the CDU at 35% and the SPD at 34%. The vote for the FDP rose to 10%. The new Left Party received 9% and the Greens held at 8%. But the Greens, whose goal was always to replace the FPP as Germany's third part, fell to fifth. The Greens were left out of government when the SPD under Schroeder joined the CDU/CSU in a national coalition designed to continue to "reform" the welfare state. A centre-left alternative, including the Greens, was ruled out by Schroeder and the SPD as they wished to pursue this agenda, strongly opposed by the Left Party. The Greens, dominated by the Realos, not only lost their role in the federal government, after the May 2005 election in North Rhine-Westphalia, they no longer had any representation in any Land legislature. (Reutter, 2004; Sloam, 2006; Thompson, 2005)

### **The transformation of the German Greens**

Why did this happen to the Greens? There are many reasons cited. For the political activists in the popular movements, they saw this as the inevitable result of participating in parliamentary politics. Representative democracy, and participating in elections which are determined by power and money, is inevitably contrary to participatory democracy. The Parliamentary Greens were unable to make any significant changes in the parliamentary process. The Greens were co-opted and evolved into just another political party.

Some commentators have stressed that the Greens moved to the right following the fading away of the popular mass grass roots movements. This reflected the general move to the right internationally under the neoliberalism of the Thatcher-Reagan era. This shift was certainly not unique to Germany.

The end of the Cold War also had a powerful impact on the left and progressive movements. With the disappearance of the Communist parties, and the weakening of their trade unions, the social democratic parties all moved to the right. The so-called Third Way of Tony Blair, Bill Clinton and Gerhart Schroeder was hardly different from the business dominated neoliberalism of the traditional right. The last great popular movement we have recently seen was the world wide mobilization against Gulf War II. Despite mass mobilizations, and strong public opposition expressed in public opinion polls, many western governments chose to back the administration of George W. Bush. After the beginning of the assault by the United States and Great Britain on Iraq, the peace movement seemed to disappear over night. The anti-globalization movement in the First World faded away after 9/11 in the world wide "war on terrorism."

The fundamentalists within the Greens argued for a transformation of capitalism into a participatory democratic government and economy. But Germany is an advanced industrialized state, with the large majority enjoying a relatively comfortable middle class life. There is little indication that the population was willing to engage in a major political struggle to transform Germany into a new society where workers and communities would be able to control capitalist development. Following the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the conflict between the First World and the Third World became primary. Germans, it would seem, decided to join forces with the United States and NATO to maintain their role in world hegemony.

### **The development and persistence of Green Parties**

While the Greens are often seen as single issue parties, this was certainly not their origin.

In general, the Green parties in the advanced industrial world had a commitment to civil and human rights, opposition to militarism and violence, support for women's emancipation, disarmament, support for the comprehensive welfare state and the elimination of poverty, and the narrowing of the gap between the rich countries and the poor countries.

Because they grew out of the "New Politics" of the 1960s and 1970s, they all had a commitment to creating a political party, and a general political system, which was far more democratic and participatory. They were strongly opposed to the traditional top down political parties and their patriarchal nature.

Because of this broad political orientation, those active in the Green parties, and those who voted for them in elections, were on the broad "left." Some commentators have described them as 'postmaterialist' in that they had weak links to the trade union membership. There is evidence that the Greens had a greater commitment to issues other than the defence of the economic and social position of those who worked for a wage or a salary.

Herbert Kitschelt, who has done enormous work over the years on Green parties, has recorded a pattern of development. The success of Green parties has been closely linked to the rise of the new left socialist parties. In Europe the Green parties grew quickly in those countries which had a history of government by social democratic parties, including Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany and Switzerland. The new left libertarian/left socialist parties grew in countries which had traditional social democratic parties where the new left politics and Green positions were largely excluded, including Denmark, The Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Following the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and the reformation of the Communist Parties as left socialist and Green parties, they also cut into the support of the Greens. This would include Finland, France, Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy. For Kitschelt, the Greens will continue to exist as long as there is an electorate which is left libertarian/left socialist. He also argues that the Greens will continue to exist and draw support only as long as they continue to project a broad political agenda and are not seen as only environmental parties. However, the Greens will have a difficult time increasing their electoral support in those countries which have an alternative in a left socialist party. (Kitschelt, 1993, 1990, 1988)

Green parties also developed in Eastern Europe in the 1980s. These parties had their major impact in a critique of the economic and environmental problems identified with the Soviet system. They did not come from a movement similar to the western New Left. Many of them ran as part of anti-socialist electoral alliances and served in coalition governments in the transition from the Soviet system. But with the onset of even worse economic and environmental conditions under the new "savage capitalism" or "mafia capitalism" of the post-Soviet period, they rapidly disappeared or were reduced to very small parties. Only the parties in Slovakia, Ukraine and Latvia have had an impact on politics. In Latvia, Indulis Emsis was the Minister of the Environment between 1993 and 1998, and was chosen prime minister in 2004. But the Latvian Greens have only existed because of their electoral alliance with the Farmers' Party and in 2002 only had 352 members. In the Ukraine the Greens benefitted from their ties to the notorious former Communist "oligarchs" who put forth coalitions which gained access to government. (Doherty, 2002; Radcliffe, 2000; Rihoux and Rudig, 2006; Rudig, 2006)

Support for the Greens in parliamentary elections has ranged between 3% and 10% of the vote. In some countries which have left socialist or New Left parties, traditional or more mainstream Green parties have not been able to function, in spite of proportional representation. This would include Denmark, Norway, The Netherlands, and Iceland. In several other countries, where there are still well established left wing or socialist parties, the Greens have only been able

to achieve seats in parliament by forging electoral alliances with left parties. This would include Portugal, Spain, France and Italy. (Doherty, 2002)

As I have argued, the ideological splits that we have seen in Germany are also present in all other Green parties. In some countries this has led to formal splits, with two or more Green parties running in elections against each other. This would include France, Luxembourg, Spain, Switzerland, Austria, and Belgium. Spain is notorious for all the different Green groups and parties. (Doherty, 2002)

Greens have been elected to parliament in most of the Western European countries and are found in the legislatures in New Zealand and Australia. In the countries with PR voting systems, coalition governments are the norm. The Green parties in Sweden and New Zealand have refused invitations to join in coalition governments with Social Democratic parties, preferring to be able to vote as they wish on basic policies. In some cases Green parties have become members of coalition governments. The first was in Finland in 1995. The French Greens were part of the plural left coalition after 1997. In Italy the Greens were part of the Olive Tree government after 1996 and are part of The Union of the Left since 2006. In Belgium both of the Green parties (Ecolo and Agalev) were part of the broad coalition government formed in 1999. With the exception of Finland, Greens have served in left coalition governments and have ruled out participation in centre-right governments. The Greens in Finland withdrew from a conservative coalition government in 2002 when they supported the expansion of nuclear power. (Doherty, 2002; Muller-Rommel, 2002; Rihoux and Rudig, 2006; Rudig, 2006)

As a general conclusion, Greens have found that they are weak members in these coalition governments. They have had very little bargaining power. As a result, they have been forced to accept policies that they did not like, which often ran contrary to their basic principles. Furthermore, they have achieved few of their own objectives. Thomas Poguntke, one of the most important commentators on Green party politics, argues that the Greens are at a disadvantage in bargaining with the “catch all” parties which lead coalition governments. They are not “pivotal parties” (like the liberal FDP in Germany) which can side either with the left or the right. “They are clearly part of the left camp,” both by their members and their electoral supporters, and contribute to the left-right polarization in electoral politics. (Poguntke, 2002; Rihoux and Rudig, 2006)

In government, Greens have usually been given the environment portfolio, which contributes to their popular image as a one issue party. This is not always to their advantage, as they often have had to come in conflict with their own party members and popular movements on key issues. For example, as Minister of the Environment in the SPD-Green coalition government in Germany, Jurgen Trittin, a representative of the left in the party, had to face very large demonstrations from the anti-nuclear organizations. The Greens in government have had a positive influence on issues like the rights of immigrants, gay and lesbian rights, greater justice for asylum seekers, but have had little influence on major party issues. As Poguntke concludes, by ignoring the major political issues, and concentrating on mainly environmental concerns, the Greens may convince the electorate that they are no longer needed. In the age of the perils of climate change, all the catch-all parties are trying to take on a Green image. (Dryzek et al, 2003; Poguntke, 2002)

As members of these coalition governments, Greens have been called on to support the push by capital and big business towards European Union, the common currency, and the reduced EU standards for social programs. While in opposition in parliament, they have been able to promote policies and introduce proposals for radical changes to serious problems, and

they have had an impact on public opinion and the policies of the major parties. Outside of government, the Greens have the ability to influence public opinion through their links to the popular movements and their ability to independently access the mass media. In addition, in order to function as members of coalition governments, Greens have been pressured to abandon their own historic commitments to rotation in office, grassroots democratic decision making, plural party leadership, and even gender parity. (Doherty, 2002; Muller-Rommel, 2002; Poguntke, 2002)

The European Green parties are divided internally over a number of key issues. One that is most important is whether or not they are going to continue as defenders of the universal welfare state or whether they are going to promote neoliberal “modernization.” Another has been whether to continue their demand for local democratic decision making or support the expansion of the European Union, which is even more bureaucratized and aloof from popular control than national governments. The dominant influence of the German Greens, and their leader Joschka Fisher, has an impact on the role the Greens play in the European Parliament and in every country. With Fisher and the German Greens demanding support for NATO and U.S. military policy, how can the rest of the Green parties maintain their historic commitment to anti-militarism? The problem facing the Greens is put by Benoit Rihoux and Wolfgang Rudig:

“If some green ‘governmental’ parties thus move towards a pro-European, pro-neoliberal as well as a pro-NATO position, then a key question could be to what extent will the most institutionalized Green parties be able to retain a specific party identity, particularly in ideological terms? Will there still be a clear difference between them and, say, a “modernized” Social Democratic or “centre-left liberal” party?” (Rihoux and Rudig, 2006, S15)

As many political scientists point out, the mainstream or “catch-all” parties such as the Social Democratic/Labour, Liberal, Conservative, and Christian Democratic will move to the right or the left according to how they read public opinion on key issues. Other parties, which are sometimes called “niche parties”, are less likely to change their position on key issues. These parties would include the Communist parties, the Left Socialist parties, the Greens and the more right wing nationalist parties. It is argued that these parties cannot moderate their policies and expect to gain greater electoral support as they will lose their supporters, their party activists, and their electorate. Their core supporters are drawn to these parties because of their ideological position and their policy platforms. Thus, it is argued, “ideological stability may actually be an optimal vote-seeking strategy for niche parties.” (Adams et al, 2006, p. 515)

A survey by a group of American political scientists of the Eurobarometer surveys between 1976 and 1998 found a strong correlation between where a potential voter placed themselves on the Eurobarometer Left-Right placement and how they voted in elections. Given voter consistency, it is argued that for niche parties “policy radicalism is an electorally pragmatic strategy.” (Adams et al, 2006, p. 530)

### **Green parties in the Anglo-American world**

The development of the Greens within the English-speaking countries has not been all that different. In Great Britain the Greens started out as the Ecology Party in 1973, a deep Green party with few links to the alternative movement. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the large environmental organizations remained separate from the Greens with much closer links to the left in the Labour Party. Within the party there was a strong commitment to the decentralized position of ecologists, vigorously opposed by the pragmatists who wished to stress

electoral politics. After the party became the Greens in 1986, they advocated a nuclear free non-aligned Europe. In recent years the party has repositioned itself to the left of the Labour Party, opposes the European Union and the globalization project, has taken a strong stand against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and has called for the re-nationalization of all the public services privatized by Tony Blair's government. The Welsh Greens, which operate as an autonomous party, work closely with Plaid Cymru, the Welsh nationalist party, including forming electoral alliances. In the Welsh legislature the two parties form the left opposition to the Labour Party. . (O'Neill, 1997; Rootes. 1995; Wall, 2005; Woodin and Lucas, 2003)

The Green parties in Scotland and Northern Ireland separated in the 1990s. The Scottish Green Party has also positioned itself to the left of the Labour Party and like the Scottish Nationalist Party and the Scottish Socialist Party supports an independent Scotland. It remains committed to most of the fundamental policies of ecology, opposition to the US/UK wars, opposes nuclear energy, promotes fair trade and increased aid to developing countries, and calls for the creation of a Citizens Income Scheme which would pay everyone a weekly income. The electoral prospects of the Scottish Green Party and the Green Party of Wales are compromised by the existence of popular nationalist parties which are also to the left of the Labour Party. In the European Parliament, the Scottish Nationalist Party and Plaid Cymru both are members of the Federation of European Greens caucus. (Hamilton, 2002; see party web sites)

The Green Party of Northern Ireland has followed a similar ideological path. But in 2005 they voted to become a region within the Green Party of Ireland. Prior to the 2005 national election, the Green Party of Ireland refused an offer from Fine Gael and Labour to join a pre-election coalition and opted instead to work to get transfer votes from Sein Fein and the other smaller left wing parties. The Irish Greens strongly supported the continuation of Ireland's status as a neutral country in the national referendum and also worked closely with Sein Fein to oppose Ireland's entrance into the European Community. Michael O'Neill argues that the weakness of the Greens in Ireland is due to their commitment to localism, the conservatism of the country, and the general desire of the Irish to see more economic development. This appears to be changing, particularly with the rise of Sein Fein as a socialist alternative electoral party. (O'Neill, 1997; see party web sites)

The New Zealand Greens go back to the Values Party of 1971. They have always been a progressive party and for several years were part of the broad Red-Green Alliance Party. They withdrew from the coalition in order to maintain their distinct status but strongly support Keynesian economics, progressive social programs, and took a strong stand against the US/UK wars in the Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq. The Labour Party under Helen Clark wanted them in the coalition government after the 2005 election, as they did not want any opposition in the legislature from the left. The Greens chose not to become part of the coalition but signed an agreement to support Labour on votes of confidence, including the budget, in return for passing some Green legislation. The party membership strongly opposed joining the Labour coalition government because of their support for the US/UK wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. (Rainbow, 2006; see party web site)

The Australian Greens have always been to the left of the Labour Party. Like the European Greens, they were grounded in the movements of the New Left. They remain committed to the Keynesian welfare state, progressive taxation, universal social programs, human rights, support for Indigenous peoples, and the elimination of poverty. They have also opposed militarism and won their first seat in parliament in a by election in Cunningham, NSW in October 2002, where they strongly opposed the war in Afghanistan and forthcoming war in

Iraq. They have been the only major party to defend the rights of refugees. In the 2004 federal election, and other state elections, they have been attacked by the Family First Party and the Christian Democratic Party for supporting women's rights and rights for gays and lesbians. Labour has chosen to make election alliances with these fundamentalist parties, committing their second preference votes under the Australian electoral system, rather than give second preference votes to the Greens. The Greens allocate their second preferences to Labour, the "lesser evil" to the Liberal-National coalition. In recent years the Greens have concentrated their electoral efforts in low income urban districts, and their share of the vote in these constituencies has commonly risen to between 20% and 30%. (Turnbull and Vromen, 2006; Turnbull and Vromen, 2004; party web site)

In the United States the Green movement began in 1984. From the beginning it was a network of people and organizations which were identified with the New Left and ecology organizations. There was a major ideological division between those who supported deep ecology and those who supported social ecology. There were divisions over the Left Green critique of capitalism and the extent to which the Green movement should support feminism. There were also strong difference of opinion over the structure of the organization and whether or not to run for major offices. In 1996 the issue was forced when several state organizations moved to nominate Ralph Nader to be the Green candidate for President.

The campaigns by Ralph Nader in 1996 and 2000 launched the Greens as a national party. Despite the internal ideological conflicts, the Green Party has taken a strong stand on a range of key issues which place it well to the left of the Democratic Party. It has taken a militant stand against George W. Bush's wars and the national security state. It has been strong on feminism, anti-racism and in support of gay and lesbian rights.

Within the U.S. Greens today there is a major division between the left in the party, which wants to develop an independent third party, and the liberals, who are willing to work in alliance with the Democratic Party. This conflict came to the fore during the buildup to the 2004 election. The left wanted to run Ralph Nader and Peter Miguel Camejo as the Green national candidates. The liberals backed David Cobb and Pat LaMarsh and endorsed the "strategic state" policy of not running a serious campaign in states where John Kerry had a chance to defeat George W. Bush. Many prominent liberals and left activists supported the "Anybody but Bush" (or "Anybody but Nader") campaign in spite of the fact that Kerry was a very strong supporter of the Iraq war and the right wing Patriot Act. The party's new system of electing delegates to national conventions boosts the representatives from states where the Greens are weak and strongly penalizes New York and California, which has the majority of Green members. The recognition that this voting system blocked the selection of the Nader-Camejo ticket has created considerable bitterness within the party.

The 2004 election was a disaster for the Green Party. Their vote fell from the 2.9 million received in 2000 by Nader-LaDuke to only 129,862 for the Cobb-LaMarsh ticket. The party recovered to some degree in the 2006 off-year elections but now must spend its time trying to rebuild its alliances. (Gaard, 1998; Hawkins, 2006)

### **The Green Party of Canada**

In November 1983 around 400 people met in Ottawa to create the Green Party of Canada. Dave Greenfield, one of the early activists in the party, argues that the Canadian group was heavily influenced by the example of the Green Party in Germany as well as the developing party in the United States. Many were also influenced by the New Age politics from the United States,

represented by Mark Satin and Charlene Spretnak. Many at the convention wanted to move beyond the left wing ideological battles of the 1970s.

Greenfield remembers that most in the new party wanted it to be a Green group and that there was no rush to create a formal political party and run candidates. Following the developments in Europe, it was agreed that the new party would be a loose confederation of local groups, designed to build a broad movement. There was no formal constitution adopted at the beginning, and even at subsequent annual meetings it was argued that they constituted a “gathering” and not a “convention.” (Greenfield, 2007)

Jim Harding attended the 1983 meeting in Ottawa and has similar recollections. “After a long discussion on where we should go, around 75% of those attending agreed that the new organization should be a loose confederation of provincial parties and regions. The majority did not want to create a traditional, formal political party and run in elections.”

However, following the meeting, a group of Green activists sponsored a national referendum on the question of the creation of a formal political party. On the basis of the responses, a group of Green supporters in Toronto and Vancouver chose to run candidates in the 1984 federal election and managed to find 50 candidates to be registered as an official political party. (Harding, 2007; Sinclair, 2007)

Like all the other Green parties the Green Party of Canada includes a mix of people with different ideological positions. There are bioregionalists, deep Greens, ecosocialists, as well as eco-libertarians. But the policy orientation of the Green Party of Canada for many years was similar to that of the European Greens and the Green Party of the United States. Aside from the environmental program, the GPC opposed militarism and participation in military alliances like NATO and NORAD, it opposed the free trade agreements and the proposed Free Trade Agreement for the Americas, it supported the United Nations and peacekeeping, and it called for a major effort to reduce the inequalities between the First and the Third World. Having adopted the Four Pillars of the international Green movement, it was committed to policies to eliminate poverty and reduce the inequalities of income, wealth and status. It pledged solidarity with the indigenous people in Canada and elsewhere. But this policy direction was challenged by a new group of members. (Historic policy of the Greens has been posted on their web site: [www.greenparty.ca](http://www.greenparty.ca))

In Ontario the leadership of the Green Party changed. A new group of ex-Tories, led by Frank de Jong, entered the party and shifted its direction to eco-capitalism, the U.S. right wing free market approach set forth by Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins and L. Hunter Lovins, the *Natural Capitalism* group. A number of the new leaders in the Ontario Greens, including de Jong came over to the party from the Conservative Party. (Hawken, et al, 1999)

In British Columbia the Greens expanded greatly under the leadership of Stuart Parker, who became leader in 1992. In 1993 he led the Greens in support of the blockades against clear cutting in Clayoquot Sound. The Greens built links to popular groups and the trade union movement. Under Parker’s leadership the Greens formed an alliance with the Committee of Progressive Electors in Vancouver and the NDP in Victoria in 1999, and Greens were elected to both city councils. Support for the Greens rose to 10% in public opinion polls. However, a group of environmentalists, based in the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, engineered a coup and took control of the B.C. party at the March 2000 provincial convention. Parker was negotiating an electoral alliance with the NDP, which would have given the Greens representation in the provincial legislature. Under the new Leader, Adrienne Carr, this political direction was rejected, and the party began a shift away from social ecology and toward

environmentalism.

At the federal level, Jim Harris, a former Tory and advocate of eco-capitalism, was elected leader of the Greens in 2003. With the new legislation promising to fund parties that obtained over 2% of the popular vote, Harris borrowed money, hired organizers, and managed to find people to run as Greens in all the federal constituencies in the 2004 election. The Party won 4% of the vote, and funds began to flow into the federal office in Ottawa. In contrast to all federal Green parties, the Canadian party under the leadership of Harris concentrated funds, staff and power in the central office. The party was transformed, becoming a highly centralized body, run in a top-down hierarchical manner. Staff were hired who had no history in the Green Party or environmental politics. Harris even hired David Scrymgeour and Tom Jarmyn, former strategists from the Progressive Conservative Party. Wealthy B.C. businessman, Wayne Crookes, lent the party over \$300,000 and became the key party man on finances. The Greens were becoming the “blue-greens.” (Curry, 2004; Dobbin, 2005)

The platform of the Green Party was transformed for the 2004 election. The opposition to free trade and military alliances disappeared. No mention was made of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and Canadian government support for George W. Bush’s military policies. It was very weak on environmental issues. Following the Ontario Greens, it called for a reduction of corporate and income taxes and replacing them with Green eco-taxes on pollution and the production of energy intensive goods. Where eco-taxes have been implemented, they are almost always carbon taxes or taxes on energy. These are regressive taxes that fall heaviest on those least able to pay. The new blue-green platform stressed tax incentives rather than environmental regulations and state enforcement. (Dobbin, 2005; Haley, 2004; Russo, 2005)

The Greens only slightly improved their vote in the 2006 federal election. Jim Harris stepped down as leader, and Elizabeth May won the leadership in a contest with David Cherneshenko, the candidate of the blue-greens. While many supported May hoping that the party would move back to the left, this remains to be seen. In the election for other party offices, the majority of positions were won by Harris supporters. There is still the very large office staff in Ottawa and a continuation of the centralized, top-down structure. This can be seen in Elizabeth May’s policy forums, which are organized from Ottawa, with no membership input. The “experts” chosen present a pre-determined view on issues. For example, the initial forum in Halifax only considered green or eco-taxes, with no representative there to advocate for progressive, Keynesian taxes, designed to reduce poverty and inequality. The Greens remain a party primarily concerned with environmental reforms. At the bi-annual convention in Ottawa in August 2006, the new party greatly weakened traditional Green policies on social justice, progressive taxation, and anti-militarism. The historic opposition to all free trade agreements was replaced by a call for the renegotiation of NAFTA. Its new policy supports the continuation of Canada’s role in Afghanistan, in support of the Bush/Blair project. (Dobbin, 2006; [www.greenparty.ca](http://www.greenparty.ca))

The Greens have been rising in the public opinion polls. In recent months support has been around 10%, while support for the NDP has dropped from 18% to 13%. Without a doubt Elizabeth May is attracting new people to the Greens. May is a dynamic, intelligent woman, and in public meetings is open and honest, who stands in stark contrast to the partisan manipulations of the leaders of the other parties. The record of Joschka Fisher in Germany demonstrates that a popular leader can increase the support for a political party, regardless of its policy positions. But how far can this go? Sooner or later, the general public learns the actual policies of Green parties.

## **Saskatchewan Greens**

The Green Party of Saskatchewan was created by community activists in Regina in the mid-1990s, and formally launched as the New Green Alliance in 1998. The people who formed the party were almost all previously active in the New Democratic Party. Many had been active in the Coalition for Social Justice and anti-poverty organizations. When the group made a decision to form a new party, an alliance was made with environmental activists in Regina and Saskatoon. The leadership of the Young New Democrats shifted to the new Green group.

Under Roy Romanow the NDP government, elected in 1991, moved steadily to the right, embracing the major policy directions of the previous Tory government headed by Grant Devine. So the main goal of the founders of the New Green Alliance was to create a left social democratic party which would defend the welfare state while seriously taking on the issue of persistent poverty. In contrast to the NDP, it was also strongly supportive of women's rights. It was hoped that the NGA would be able to build bridges to the Aboriginal communities, isolated and shunned, outside the political and civil system. (Warnock, 2005, 2004, 2003)

But there were Green issues as well. While the environmental movement was very weak in the province, there had been a broad popular movement opposing uranium mining and refining and the links to the U.S. military machine. The NGA was strongly committed to ending the nuclear industry in Saskatchewan. An alternative energy program, and a strong commitment to Kyoto goals, were central to NGA policy.

The new Saskatchewan Greens were the first to take up the issue of industrial agriculture. In opposition to the NDP government and the Liberal and Saskatchewan parties, the NGA strongly supported ecological and organic agriculture, small family farms, local food production, and opposed corporate farming and agribusiness interests. They joined the Organic Directorate in opposition to genetically engineered crops.

A number of the founding members of the NGA had been members of the Green Party of Canada since the early 1980s and were greatly influenced by the development of the Green Party in Germany. The party as a whole was in the camp of the ecologists, as opposed to the environmentalists, and quite a few considered themselves to be eco-socialists. But at no time during the founding of the NGA was there any debate or discussion of the conflict between the two major factions that were present in all the Green parties in the advanced industrialized world.

At the time, the founding members of the Saskatchewan Greens decided to form an independent provincial party and not directly affiliate with the Green Party of Canada. For the Green activists in Saskatchewan, it was obvious that we still live in a capitalist society, that there are still social classes, and that there are profound differences between left and right. The majority feared that the Green Party of Canada was too weak on social justice issues. As the federal party shifted to the right, as well as the leadership of the Greens in Ontario and British Columbia, the Saskatchewan Greens felt increasingly isolated from the trends in the other Canadian Green parties. (Warnock, 2004; 2000)

Where the party ran candidates, they averaged 5% of the vote in the 1999 provincial election. In the 2003 provincial election it appeared that the right wing Saskatchewan Party was going to win. The NDP government literally changed its colours and adopted Green in their campaign materials, claiming they were the only real Green party in the province. They also launched a major campaign insisting that all progressives had to back the NDP or else face an even worse situation if the Saskatchewan Party were elected. To a large extent this worked. Quite a few of the Green activists quit and went back to the NDP. Many Green supporters

announced that they were going to vote for the NDP. When the results were in, Green candidates received a lower percentage of votes than they did in 1999. The NDP won a narrow election, but the general policy direction of the government did not change. A provincial election is expected in the fall of 2007, and it is widely believed that the NDP will suffer a major defeat. It remains to be seen if more voters will now feel free enough to support the Greens.

### **The growing international crisis**

The world economy has been in a general boom period for the past four years. Yet even the mainstream press has reported the growing gap in income and wealth between the rich and the poor, within all countries, and between the industrialized north and the less developed south. Even the free market *Economist* warns that this is a serious problem. Poverty and marginalization are now identified as serious problems in all countries. In this era of neoliberal globalization, people are forced to work longer and harder and most see their real incomes drop. Precarious work is on the rise. There is no job security, and for most in the private sector, pensions and other benefits are much less certain.

This is the first crisis of capitalism, as described by Marx and Engels, the crisis of production and the conflict between the producing and owning classes. In the period since World War II, this crisis has been mitigated by a steady economic growth and the spread of the mass consumer society. A key part of this has been the persistence of imperialism, the exploitation of labour and resources in the less developed capitalist countries. For those with rising incomes, the purchase of an endless stream of commodities, and family life outside work, are deemed to be the compensations for alienation. But how long can this continue?

In 2006 people in the industrialized countries finally became aware of the problems that are being caused by greenhouse gas emissions, global warming and climate change. Each new study seems to report that the situation is getting worse and change is happening faster than expected. There was the report by Sir Nicholas Stern to Tony Blair's government on the economic impact of climate change, released in October 2006. The eminent mainstream economist predicted an economic collapse and death for hundreds of millions if there were no major shifts away from the burning of fossil fuels. He seemed to endorse the 2004 Pentagon Report which predicted an international crisis much worse than the war on terrorism, with many new wars for control of food and other resources. (Hughes, 2007; Schwartz and Randall, 2004; Stipp, 2004)

In February 2007 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued its fourth report, documenting the growing problem. Scientists criticized the report for "soft pedaling" the issue by ignoring "the two gorillas" – the rapid melting of the Antarctic ice cap and the ice on Greenland. Public opinion polls showed that Canadians rated climate change as the most serious problem facing the government. (IPCC, 2007)

This should remind us of James O'Connor's description of the second crisis of capitalism: in its advanced stage, the drive for accumulation forces capital to over exploit natural resource extraction and the environment in general. Capital in this advanced stage is in the process of destroying the "natural conditions of production." (O'Connor, 1998)

In the past, capitalism has been able to contain the political fallout from the exploitative production process. It has always used state power to control workers and peasants. It has relied on religion, education and the mass media to impose a capitalist ideology. When necessary, it has agreed to a welfare state to undermine working class opposition. But the crisis of Fordist national production in the 1970s undermined some of this power. Capital was forced to adopt

“globalization” as the alternative to the redistribution of power, wealth and income. Increased global competition has led capital to cut the welfare state and taxes. Furthermore, since the neoliberal model has only exacerbated structural problems in the less developed world, it has been necessary to increasingly rely on U.S. military power to maintain the status quo.

However, the impending crisis of climate change calls for a major state involvement in the economy. Free market policies like trading carbon credits, and giving countries credits for carbon sinks, will not in any way deal with the real problem. The barrier to effective policy is the existence of the neoliberal order, demanded by capital.

In the past, capital has been able to survive even the most challenging crises. It has survived the first Great Depression (1873-96), the second Great Depression (1929-1940) and World War I and World War II. It defeated the workers’ attempt to create the new Soviet states. It survived the anti imperialist movements after World War II. It transformed the world after the economic crisis of 1975. Can it survive the crisis of climate change? The *Ecologist* calls for a “second industrial revolution,” and Liberal Leader Stephan Dion says Canada can not only deal with climate change, we can get rich doing so by modifying our economic structure. We can save capitalism.

We do not know how far reaching the ecological and economic problems will be under climate change. But all the scientific data suggests that the impact will be tremendous. The First World, in my opinion, is ready to accept the death of hundreds of millions of African and Bangladesh peoples. Few people seem to care what happens to the people of the North. But if the scientists are right, with the melting of the Greenland ice, the Gulf Stream could be radically changed and Europe could find itself with winters like we have in Saskatchewan. How will that play out?

### **The need for a new politics.**

We know one thing for sure. A crisis on the magnitude of what is being predicted will produce new mass movements. In Europe the marginalized have been turning to neo-fascism, and we can expect that to develop. But this is the time for a new politics of the left. The communist alternative that we knew has disappeared. The social democrats offer nothing different from the traditional conservative parties. The Greens are divided, with some taking a left position in defence of the welfare state and social justice. But most are only taking a moderate position on the issue of the ecological crisis. The IPCC says we need a 70% reduction in fossil fuel consumption in order to stabilize the climate. It appears that all governments are on the same page. Some environmental measures will be taken. But there is no serious effort being made, anywhere, to radically change our energy intensive economy.

What is required now, of course, is a transformation of society. But this option requires as a minimum for governments to do national planning on the level that was required during World War II. The goals of government and society have to be changed. At the same time, the crisis will demand local organization and local control. The original German Green project was on the right track. A transformation of capitalism is required. The alternative must include democratization, workers’ control over the means of production, and emphasis on the quality of life. The crisis of climate change demands the rejection of the mass consumer society. We can expect the demand for change to arise in the less developed countries, which will be the first to experience the impact of the radical changes that are being predicted. But when will a new movement emerge in the First World?

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