

Reviving Town Meeting

Town Meeting: A Space for Communal Liberty

By Frank Bryan

I am unsure of the exact date but the fall of 1957 will do. Forces in Montpelier were (and had been for some time) making war on the small schools of Vermont. I was a sophomore at Newbury High School which, on a good year, graduated about a dozen students. I was to graduate in 1959, a very good year indeed. My class had seven students.

I was 15 in the fall of '57 and, like most of the students, was opposed to the "consolidation" of Newbury High with schools from another town. The issue was now critical because the state had threatened to close us because we lacked a school library. No matter one of the oldest and finest small town libraries in Vermont was within shouting distance of the schoolyard, which doubled as one of the most beautiful town commons in Vermont. The town library was open to the public only on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday morning. Arrangements could have been made.

So, with the support of the four teachers and the principal (the entire staff of the school) a group of students along with other adults in town decided to build a library in an abandoned room in the basement. Over several weekends we cleaned, shelved, and painted. The community kicked in

continued on page 4

Vermont's Energy Future: 10 Reasons for Hope

By Greg Strong

With all of the hoopla swirling around the topic of the state's energy affairs (can you say: "\$100 dollars per barrel," "expiring power contracts," "commercial wind energy," "energy efficiency funding," "nuclear energy safety," "food versus biofuels," and "carbon footprint?"), we thought we'd jump into 2008 by focusing on what's going right on the Vermont energy front.

Our rationale? Just maybe, a focus on the positive will inform our next steps toward a more secure, independent, clean, prosperous, and nurturing Vermont.

So, just what is going right on the Vermont energy scene? A lot, it turns out, but too much to fit into a pithy list of 10, or even 50. So we backed it up into the *categories* of things going right. Still an awesome task, but somewhat more manageable. What we came up with was a grouping of organizations, initiatives, ideas, policies, projects, and people that are positively affecting and informing our energy directions.

Even still, this is just a taste. Our apologies to those we've omitted. Let us know about you and your work; we'd love to hear what you are up to so that we can talk to you the next time we round this particular corner. Until then, here's our list for 2008.

continued on page 16



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

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Town Meeting: A Space for Communal Liberty, by Frank Bryan
- 1 Vermont's Energy Future: 10 Reasons for Hope, by Greg Strong
- 2 *Vermont Commons*: Our "Journal of Ideas" Goes Statewide, Editorial
- 3 Letters to the Editor
- 6 Notes from the Middlebury Institute: "Why The Move to Sustainability," by Thomas Moore
- 8 Vermont Vox Populi: An Interview with Lisa McCrory and Carl Russell of Earthwise Farm & Forest, by Carolyn Baker
- 10 Free Vermont Media: Meet the Vermont Commons Blogging Team
- 12 Localvore Living: "In Winter, The Key is Preparation," by Robin McDermott
- 14 The Greenneck: "Reflections on Vermont While on a Florida Bicycle Ride"
- 22 Vermont Libre: "The Genteel Revolution," by Thomas Naylor
- 24 Dispersions: "Dispatches From the Front," by Kirkpatrick Sale

WINTER ON THE WEB

- Meet Vermont Commons publisher Ian Baldwin (Video)
- Ethan Allen's "Faneuil Hall" Report (Speech)
- Tim Matson's "Dying to Pollute" (Humor)
- Your cards and letters
- "Most Likely to Secede" and "U.S. Out Of Vermont" T-shirts

Join the Conversation: www.vtcommons.org
to subscribe to our free electronic newsletter,
contact webeditor@vtcommons.org



Uphill Traction: With emerging 21st century realities of global peak oil and climate change, how will we Vermonters re-invent our Green Mountain communities? CREDIT: BRIAN MOHR/EMBERPHOTO.COM

Editorial

Vermont Commons: Our “Journal of Ideas” Goes Statewide in 2008

After a pause — our most recent issue was last October — *Vermont Commons* is back. We return as a bimonthly, and subsequent issues will appear according to Vermont’s unique transformative seasons, six in all. Our first issue is our “Winter/Town Meeting” issue, to be closely followed, in one month’s time, by our second, the “Mud Season/Spring Planting” issue (due out in early March).

For the first time since our founding in early 2004, we will not only be distributed in every corner of the state — up to 200 locations from Brattleboro to the Northeast Kingdom, St. Albans to Bennington — but we also will no longer depend on another newspaper to carry us in its pocket. We now have our own distributor.

If you haven’t checked out our constantly updated and upgraded website, www.vtcommons.org, please do. We have close to one dozen blog streams underway now, as described in our current “Free Vermont Media” column (see pages 10-11), and we plan to expand the number of bloggers who make regular contributions to the online dialogue about a vigorous independence movement here in our once and future republic.

In 2008 we expect the movement for Vermont independence to grow, and to deepen its roots in many a Vermonter’s heart and mind. We believe

that political independence and economic sustainability are indissolubly linked. True, many Vermonterers active in one or another of the many sectors of Vermont’s economy — sectors that will eventually be transformed and add up to a whole sustainable economy — still don’t see political independence as either necessary or of overriding importance. Indeed, we have learned that for some eternal unionists, the mere idea of secession is a philosophical and moral anathema.

What social movement does not engender hostility in some citizens, especially those who do not welcome change? We know that the Vermont independence movement will take time to develop, as many of us will continue to chase after the vanishing chimera of a lost dream, of a now-defunct United States republic, a dream that no longer helps us to change, but on the contrary hinders the vital process of our adaptation to a new reality — to living in a whole new landscape.

These are momentous times. The “world order” based on the principle of what Chalmers Johnson calls “military Keynesianism,” crafted more than 50 years ago, is coming unhinged. The question many of us — admittedly not our Republican or Democratic presidential candidates, but many of the rest of us marooned in the

Empire that is now the United States of America — are asking is “Why?” And, why now?

There is no short answer to these two questions. But there are some essential and striking facts, acknowledged by few. The Comptroller General of the United States has told his fellow citizens that their “federal government’s fiscal exposures totaled approximately \$53 trillion as of September 30, 2007.” Not the \$9 trillion of national debt currently bandied about: \$53 trillion worth of obligations that cannot be met. Ever. That sum “translates into a current burden of about \$175,000 per American or approximately \$455,000 per American household.” In the words of Nobel economist Joseph Stiglitz: “There is something bizarre and troubling about the richest country in the world not being able to live even remotely within its means.”

Indeed. Very troubling. And very, very bizarre.

According to *Long Emergency* author James Howard Kunstler, the current state of global finance can only be understood in relationship to “peak oil” (and “peak” natural gas, as well). Finance, meanwhile, once a necessary and useful tool of economic growth, has mutated into a kind of Frankenstein monster, bullying and distorting a once-productive U.S. economy purely for its own growth and gain. We are in the middle of a reckoning that will leave none of us untouched, a panicked orgy of greed and manipulation that in the end will reveal the depths of our collective denial of the truth: our way of life must change, and change radically, whether we want it to or not.

This is indeed bitter medicine for the “leaders” who drove their bankrupt nation pell-mell into Afghanistan and then Iraq, their eyes fervently fixed on Iran (and Syria), their bankers’ printing presses ceaselessly humming, 24-7. In their determination they have laid waste to entire nation states and peoples, wrecked beyond repair thousands upon thousands of American lives, and spent immense sums of money neither they nor their citizens ever really had, much less *will ever have*, all to wage their self-proclaimed “perpetual war” to preserve “The American Way of Life.” They are leaders who cannot be stopped, either by “the Democrats,” or by “our allies,” as we have seen. Only the reality that is bearing down on all of us can bring an end to the desecrations of these leaders, desecrations done in our names.

And so, the time has come to talk about divorce. Dissolution. Decentralization. Secession.

On December 17, 2007 members from the Lakota Sioux took steps to secede from the United States, sending four representatives to Washington, D.C. Phyllis Young, one of their spokespersons, succinctly declared that “the actions of the Lakota are not intended to embarrass the United States but simply to save the lives of our people.” Their formal withdrawal was hand-delivered to the appropriate official of the U.S. State Department, and it “irrevocably ends all agreements between the Lakota Sioux Nation of Indians and the United States Government outlined in the 1851 and 1868 Treaties [signed] at Fort Laramie,

continued on page 23

Contributors

Carolyn Baker is an adjunct professor of history and manager of the Truth To Power website at www.carolynbaker.net. She is also the former managing editor of *From The Wilderness* publications and author of *U.S. History Uncensored: What Your High School Textbook Didn't Tell You*.

Ian Baldwin is cofounder of Chelsea Green Publishing and is publisher of *Vermont Commons*.

Frank Bryan teaches political science at the University of Vermont. He co-authored *The Vermont Papers: Recreating Democracy on a Human Scale* (with John McClaughry), and has written several other books about Vermont politics.

‘The Greenneck’ lives and writes in the rusted-out shell of a one-ton Chevy pickup somewhere in Cabot.

Tara Hamilton’s paid work is in the fields of conservation and planning, but she is also a photographer, artist, writer, and environmental advocate. She lives in Warren, Vermont.

Robin McDermott lives with her husband in Waitsfield, where they have a web- and computer-based training business.

Brian Mohr and his wife Emily Johnson photograph nearly anything that catches their eye for editorial, commercial, special-event, and fine-art clients in Vermont and worldwide. You can view more of their work at www.emberphoto.com.

Thomas Naylor, economist, businessman, and author, is co-founder of the Second Vermont Republic.

Annalisa Parent is a freelance writer and photographer living in South Burlington.

Mike Riddell (www.mikeriddellphotography.com) runs a photography business in Fayston, Vermont, and is an avid outdoor enthusiast.

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

Jack Stone is a Greensboro, North Carolina-based artist who hikes frequently with his Lab and Beagle, and whose work can be seen at www.brushfirestudios.org.

Greg Strong owns and operates Spring Hill Solutions, LLC, a renewable energy, carbon management, and business sustainability consulting firm located in Burlington.

Letters to the Editor

TOWARD A VERMONT-FIRST STRATEGY

Editor, *Vermont Commons*:

Now that the Bush administration is on its way into the ash heap of history, what will become of the Vermont secession movement? Much of the 21st century impetuous for secession was based on anti-Bush fears, so it seems like secessionist dialogue is at a crossroads. We could say nothing has changed when Bush leaves office, since the Republicans and Democrats are essentially the same party – a view I don't accept. We can continue to let *cause célèbre* issues like peak oil and 9/11 conspiracism project our identity to Vermonters. Or we can begin to lay a firmer foundation built from Vermont's history, and the concerns of moderate Vermonters.

What mainstream concerns might we rally around? The "No Child Left Behind" intrusion into our public schools, regressive tax policies in the United States – Vermonters can find consensus on those issues. The idiotic foreign policy of the American Empire, paranoid border restrictions with Canada, also paying into a half-a-trillion-dollar military budget – those are injustices a Vermont majority would fight. The Vermont health care system eviscerated by federal diktats, and interference from the federal government in clean air and clean water initiatives... The secessionist answer to those challenges can provide Vermonters with hope.

Recent years have provided the best opportunity to broaden secessionist debate that we've had since the 200th anniversary of statehood in 1991, yet there seems to be no coherent strategy to produce anything other than symbolic events. Independence is merely a curiosity to too many Vermonters. We should ask ourselves why. I'm concerned that the personal agendas of some high-profile people in the movement have diminished our impact.

In an interview on the antiracist website mootstormfront.com, Dr. Naylor, founder of Second Vermont Republic, stated: "Peaceful dissolution of the empire is more important to me than secession from the United States." More important? I find that position appalling. It's as if Vermont is just a scenic backdrop for pontificating on U.S. dissolution. At the First North American Secessionist convention, in Burlington in 2005, representatives from fundamentalist Christian groups, neo-Confederates, and other right-wing extremists were welcomed into the Green Mountain State. But there's no reason to form alliances with groups that an overwhelming majority of Vermonters would consider unsavory. Our movement must focus on gaining allies WITHIN our borders. As for other states – just as we invented civil unions in 2000 and other states followed, just as we began the nuclear freeze movement in the early '80s and other states followed, so too may it be with secession.

Those prominent in the movement should live up to the mantle of leadership they've assumed by abandoning pet causes. Lincoln revisionism, for example, has crept into Vermont secessionist dialogue. Why? It's a slap in the face of Vermont's

history. The descendants of farmers and tradesmen who destroyed the slave-holding oligarchy are the people we must honor in our cause, not alienate by saying their grandfathers were duped into their graves.

Equally destructive to our credibility has been vocal adherence to the 9/11 "truth" fad. 9/11 conspiracism is totally alien to most Vermonters, and all of its central tenets have been thoroughly refuted. Fortunately 9/11 "truth" is already becoming a spent force. The "truth" fad was about trying to fix the United States, and should have never entered our dialogue in the first place.

Let Vermont independence be our only cause. Perhaps the time has come for a Republic of Vermont legislature to be formed to inaugurate an elected leadership? Let us move toward unifying local currency projects into a national Vermont currency, by petitioning those organizations. How might we work on officially changing the flag of Vermont, to strengthen our national identity under the flag of the First Republic?

I don't pretend to know what's practical or can really be done, but I do think a Vermont First strategy aimed at taking proactive local steps needs to be our priority. We've preached to the choir long enough. Let 2008 be a year of action.

MARC AWODEY
BURLINGTON

Editor's Note: While we heartily concur with Mr. Awodey's "Vermont First" strategy, we've never claimed in these pages that Vermonters were "duped" into fighting Mr. Lincoln's War, but rather that Mr. Lincoln and the Republican Party's radical re-interpretation of the U.S. Constitution and the relationship between the U.S. government and the citizens of each sovereign state effectively erased secession – a widely accepted U.S. Constitutional policy option first championed by the citizens of 19th century New England – from U.S. political discourse in the years since the end of the so-called "Civil War." Re: 9/11, we simply suggest that citizens read the official "9/11 Commission Report" and thoughtfully researched critiques of it (theologian David Ray Griffin's well-documented 330-page book "The 9/11 Commission Report: Omissions and Distortions" is a good starting place) and make up their own minds.

WORDS TO UNITE, NOT INCITE

Editor, *Vermont Commons*:

It was with great disappointment I read that "climate change" remains at the top of goals for the legislative session of 2008. At first glance this may seem a very odd statement from an outspoken advocate of renewable energy, but please hear me out.

Over recent years "climate change" has emerged as one of the most instantly divisive terms in modern Vermont vernacular. When this term is used, timely and necessary discussions regarding energy immediately become politically charged and much less productive. Precious time is thus wasted. If perhaps we chose to describe the exact same initiatives as "Protecting Vermont's



VERMONT COMMONS

www.vtcommons.org

Publisher *Ian Baldwin*
Associate Publishers *Rick Foley and*
Editor, Web Editor *Rob Williams*
Managing Editor *Will Lindner*
Art Director *Peter Holm*
Subscriptions *Rob Williams*
Business Manager *Eric Plump*
Advertising Manager *Rob Williams*

Editorial Committee

Ian Baldwin, Rick Foley, Ron Miller, Eric Plump, Rob Williams

Editorial Office and Submissions

PO Box 1021, Waitsfield, VT 05673

Business Office

PO Box 3, Taftsville, VT 05073

Subscriptions

\$25 a year for 6 issues
subscriptions@vtcommons.org
Vermont Commons
PO Box 1021, Waitsfield, VT 05673

Advertising

ads@vtcommons.org
PO Box 1121, Waitsfield, VT 05673

Vermont Commons welcomes your input.

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

economy through efficiency and endogenous energy production," the same goals, carbon reduction and otherwise, would be met without wasteful debate regarding a vast global issue. When phrased this way the concept makes too much sense to politicize and we could actually get some results this year. One must wonder why such incitant language continues to be used at a time when Vermont needs to pull together, not apart.

Vermont deserves no less.

ANDERS HOLM
MIDDLEBURY

Bryan, continued from page 1

books to go with those on shelves in the four rooms that comprised the high school in a nine-room, twelve-grade school building.

I will never forget the day the man came to inspect our new library, or his condescending officialdom. But I especially remember his god-damned tape measure that concluded: well, the room was, unfortunately (the man sighed), several square feet too small. Besides (gee) it was too poorly lighted, ventilated and (darn it) carpeted. And, of course (gosh), it was unsafe. We'd need to jackhammer a hole in the foundation, put in a door, and pour cement steps up to ground level.

Newbury High School hung on for another decade or so, but finally—to quote Joseph Heller in *Catch 22* – they “disappeared” it.

In effect, the man had said our library failed to meet state standards, and for this (and lots of other reasons) our school was unsustainable in the modern world. To which we muttered “bullshit.” Today after a half century of reflection, study, and involvement in public education (at the high school as well as college level) I would make only one minor editorial change to my reaction of so long ago.

I would hit the caps lock and embolden it to read:

BULLSHIT.

In case you might be thinking the educational product there must have been pretty good because it produced a college professor like me who has published more peer-reviewed and well-published social science about Vermont than anyone else in the 20th Century, you'd be dead wrong. This little school, sustained on a human scale by a civic society of practicing democrats (small ‘d’ – Newbury was overwhelmingly Republican in those days) produced an *excellent* educational experience because it judged me as I should have been judged. It judged me unfit for college. And I was. My grades were awful.

I was *turned down* at UVM when I applied. My GPA my senior year was 2.0. I dropped Latin. Earlier I had gotten Cs in my two years of French and dropped Algebra II. Scott Mahoney, a great Democrat and teacher, gave me a C- in world history! When it was over I finished third in a class of seven. (A couple of percentage points and I'm in the bottom half!) In short, I didn't measure up to the standards set by Newbury High School, even though every teacher there did everything humanly possible to help me. They knew my family, my strengths, my weaknesses, and me. They cared – not because they were more “caring” than the teachers in today's big, regional schools, but because it was impossible not to care. The school and the town were too small. Institutional size and personal proximity – these are the variables that matter.

But they couldn't compete with the hunting, hell raising, and hormones. (I wish I could go to them now and apologize.)

Right next to the high school building in Newbury was the town hall where the people held town meetings.

And still do.

Town meetings have not been disappeared.

Yet.

But trust me on this: there are people every-



UVM Political Science Professor Frank Bryan. CREDIT: MICHAEL RIDDELL

where with tape measures.

Through their action and strategic inaction, these people are destroying our democracy. They believe that we are as incapable of governing ourselves as we are of seeing to the education of our children. Fundamentally, of course, the fault is not theirs. It is ours. We are letting them get away with it. We don't care enough.

And that's a shame, because we can save Vermont's democracy. Compared to establishing a Second Vermont Republic it would be so easy. What does this say about us — we who claim we can lead Vermont to independence in the face of the most powerful nation the world has ever known — if we cannot convince our own state to let its citizens practice their own democracy in the communities in which they live? Those of us who are fed up with the federal government are sometimes accused of indulging in a quixotic charge against windmill America while we let our own democracy slip through our fingers. At this point, a defense against that charge is hard to come by.

What follows is my take on what must be done to insure such a defense would be as easy as it was

The most inhibiting variable to a healthy democracy is size. Using sound statistical devices it is possible to be clear about this: Attendance at town meeting drops profoundly as community size increases.

unnecessary. For it is my belief that if we are to plan for sustainability in an environmental, economic, social, and cultural sense, we must first recognize that our democracy is the engine that sustains sustainability.

(1) The fundamental forces at work undermining town meeting are the same core forces that have already destroyed representative democracy in America: uniformity, centralism, arrogance, and greed. From our communities to our governance, from our farms to our factories, from our needs to our capacities, indeed from our understandings of

our own surroundings to the very values by which we live, human scale is being replaced by system scale, community is falling to hierarchy, democracy to authority, variety to symmetry, creativity to rigidity, civility to rudeness – and in the end, humanity to inhumanity.

And the hell of it is this need not be the case.

(2) The extent of the problem: Town meeting attendance has been on a downward slope for (at least) 35 years. I have provided a chart (Chart I, page 5) that demonstrates this. Based on a yearly sample of about 50 towns a year, the average attendance of the registered voters in each town who attended town meeting has dropped from about 26 percent between 1970 and 1979 to about 15 percent between 1996 and 2006. For the town meetings I sampled in 2004, 2005, and 2006, turnout averaged 13 percent.

This is a huge loss. Even if the decline has bottomed out and the 13 percent figure holds up in the future, town meeting attendance will have been cut in half since the 1970s. (Note: For those who think that 13 percent represents a far weaker commitment to civil society than voting at the polls in state and national elections, consider the findings Susan Clark and I reported in our book *All Those in Favor*: “In the average community with a town meeting, Vermonters spend in the aggregate about 2,240 hours at town meetings taking care of local business during a typical four-year presidential election cycle. (And this doesn't count any special town meetings that may be held during the year.) In contrast, when we add up the time spent voting in the presidential election, off-year elections and primaries, the aggregate citizens of our typical town will give up 908 hours of their personal lives over four years. Vermonters commit nearly two and a half times as many hours to *governing themselves* at town meeting as they do to choosing others (from their local representative in the House of Representatives in Montpelier to the president of the United States) to *govern them*.”

(3) What to do? Several levels of solutions exist. First, many more-or-less technical improvements could be made to improve town meeting attendance. These involve issues like scheduling (such as rethinking night meetings, which lower women's attendance) and voting procedures (never — as in NEVER — adopt the Australian Ballot). For a thorough listing of these kinds of measures see: *All Those in Favor*. Second (at the other end of the spectrum of possibility), are fundamental cultural re-orientations. It gets down to this.

We have to learn to be happy living small.

I have written before in these pages on why I believe these cultural changes are in the works already, based on information technology that allows us to work, play, and govern ourselves in a relatively small place.

In between these extremes are two projects, which are critical. The first is very difficult and will take time. The size of our communities must be reduced or (at a minimum) kept small. The most inhibiting variable to a healthy democracy is size. Using sound statistical devices it is possible to be clear about this. Attendance at town meet-

continued on following page

continued from previous page

ing drops profoundly as community size increases. Most of the decline in attendance since 1970 is attributable to town size. As a matter of fact, this relationship is one of the strongest in all political science. To demonstrate its power I have included a second chart (Chart II, below) showing the relationship between community size and town meeting attendance for the most recent sample of towns I have studied.

By taking a quick squint at this chart we can judge each town on the extent to which it met its “size-predicted attendance quota.” The heavy curved line represents the percent of a town’s registered voters that could be expected to be at town meeting, given the town’s size. Williston and Hinesburg, for instance, pretty much exactly meet their size-based predictions. St. George and Burke drop substantially below theirs, while Strafford and Peacham do a lot better than predicted. But overall, it is abundantly clear that smaller towns have much higher attendance at town meeting than larger towns. We could increase citizens’ participation in town meetings dramatically if we could keep the size of the towns small.

But it is very difficult for towns to strengthen their democracy this way, for they lack the authority to do so. And this fact brings to the table the second powerful instrument available to us to revitalize our local democracies. Empower them. Why? Because the second most influential factor increasing participation at town meeting is the presence of a controversial item on the warning.

Chart II provides dramatic evidence of this. The town that exceeded its size limitations the most was Sheffield. A town of 402 registered voters like Sheffield can generally be expected to have about 72 people at town meeting on any given year, 18 percent of its registered voter list. But in 2006, Sheffield turned out more than twice that amount – 169 voters, 42 percent of its potential turnout. Residents of the Northeast Kingdom know why. A plan to bring wind generators into town as an alternative energy source was hugely controversial.

(4) The Basic Plan: Power to the Towns

I have studied more than 1,700 town meetings in Vermont over 37 years. And over and over again this incandescent truth emerges: give the people

the right to decide issues that matter and they will respond. Again and again and again the puzzle of high (or low) attendance becomes clear. Let the people govern. Controversy is good for democracy. As long as people are different and interesting and in control of their lives, controversy will arise. The

I have studied more than 1,700 town meetings in Vermont over 37 years.

And over and over again this incandescent truth emerges: give the people the right to decide issues that matter and they will respond.

role of democracy is to resolve conflict, not stifle it. The role of democracy is to deal with it where it is, not package it up and make off with it to Montpelier or Washington where local variants evaporate, where human scale is lost in an aggregated statistical mist.

The definitive study of local control published in the 1970s showed conclusively that Vermont has one of the very weakest systems of local government in America. Among other indicators, G. Ross Stephens found that between 1957 and 1974 no state centralized its government more quickly than Vermont. It is odd and deeply disturbing that the government of the state with the best system of local democracy, Vermont, has systematically stripped its citizens of the right to practice this democracy on matters of importance in their lives. The Kennedy School’s Jane Mansbridge, a leading American political theorist (author of “Beyond Adversary Democracy”, “Why We Lost the ERA” and a slue of other remarkable works) addressed this situation in 1981 in her classic, two-year study of a real Vermont town she fictitiously called Selby. She reported, “The diminishing power of the town has inevitably had an effect on town meeting attendance.”

Things have gotten remarkably worse since that time.

“Power to the people” is a hollow cry if the peo-

ple are but a mass. But where the people live closely to each other and the land in enduring democratic communities, no admonition is more powerful. Without it all attempts to create sustainable economies linked to sustainable physical ecologies will soon crumble under the mass imperatives of distant, rudderless, fearful, indulgent majorities.

Those who cherish individual liberty as it is worked out in Aristotelian terms – that is, liberty outside the context of the polis is a sham – have a profound opportunity to establish such a vision in Vermont. We already have the structure: town meeting. We already have the place (a larger percentage of our population residing in towns of less than 2,500 people than any other state). We already have a cadre of democrats left and right who understand that our cherished representative republic called America is deeply in trouble; who understand with Jefferson, DeTocqueville, John Stuart Mill, Hannah Arendt, Lewis Mumford, and so many others that without the “little republics” where citizens are trained, where civility becomes a habit, where voters have the space to tie their hearts to the commonweal, no representative republic can long endure.

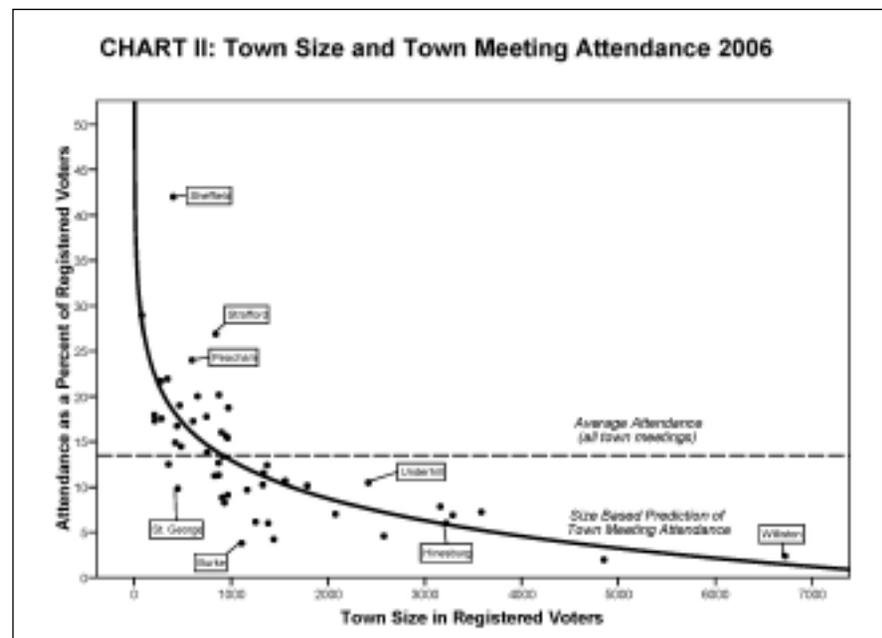
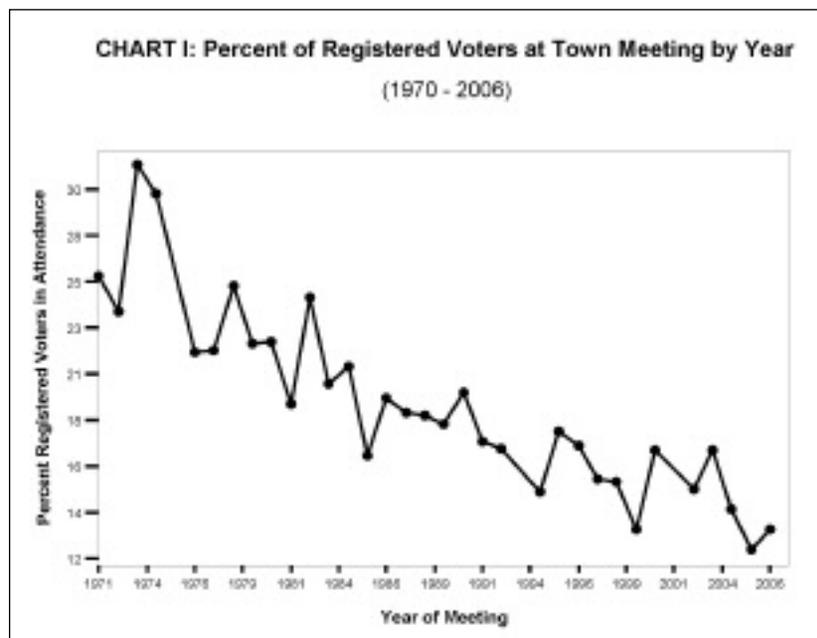
Town meetings are the best hope for such a truly communitarian space.

It is the first thing we must shore up against the flood of mass society and its inhuman politics that has crested over the republic. Let us be about it. Let us strengthen town meeting by returning to it its right to decide important issues that effect people’s lives. Then let us sustain it.

Perhaps it is not too late for the nation. As America slips away into the civic horrors of mass politics, perhaps Vermont can be what L. S. Stavrianos called “The Promise of the Coming Dark Age.” Perhaps we can become a beacon to lead the republic back to its roots.

If not, we can at least make it more difficult for men with tape measures to package up what Benjamin Barber called (in reference to the Swiss Cantons) our communal liberties and then carry them off. For if that happens, take a good look at the United States. We will look just like it, independent or not.

Perhaps we owe America the effort. We certainly owe it to ourselves. •



FROM THE MIDDLEBURY INSTITUTE *By Kirkpatrick Sale*

Why the Move to Sustainability 'Our abundance has peaked'

By Thomas Moore

The following essay, by Thomas Moore of the Southern National Congress Committee, is the start of a mission statement for a new organization that will explore and develop the ideas, processes, and tools for the kinds of sustainability that we all will need to know as and when the empire collapses. The full document can be read at www.sisinc.org. — KIRKPATRICK SALE

The Southern Institute for Sustainable Living, Inc. The Southern Institute for Sustainable Living (SISL) is a nonprofit educational foundation organized as a Virginia non-stock corporation. The business office is in Alexandria, Virginia, with our principal permaculture* site in southwest Virginia. Additional facilities are in Clemson, South

Carolina. Our purpose is to promote sustainable living by cultivating and passing on to others the practical arts and skills necessary for self-sufficiency in food, shelter, health, and renewable, non-polluting energy.

Why "Sustainable"? What's Wrong With the Way We Live Now?

Those who make their living from the land are charter members of the "reality-based community." This post-modern term was intended to be derisive, yet it captures a truth its purveyors didn't intend. The farmer and stockman know from experience the reality of nature's inexorable laws. All their planning and hard work can be nullified in an instant by hail or rain, or over time by blight

or drought. No amount of self-delusion or wishful thinking will halt the winds or bring the rains. As the great Southerner Robert E. Lee once observed, "Nature will always assert her rights."

In today's America reality is catching up with us all – rich or poor, wise or foolish, prudent or improvident. The evidence on every hand is indisputable: we are facing multiple, converging challenges – environmental, social, and economic. Our way of life has changed, is changing, or is likely to change dramatically; and for the worse, if present trends continue unabated. *It is simply not sustainable.*

We are not climatologists, but it appears to us
continued on following page



The extended drought in the southeastern U.S. could be a harbinger of global water shortages due to overuse, overpopulation, and climate change. Here, in a January 20, 2008 photograph, stumps and exposed lake bed ring Lake Townsend, one of three municipal reservoirs supplying the city of Greensboro, North Carolina. The lake level is down 74 inches. CREDIT: JACK STONE

continued from previous page

that the globe is undergoing a warming spell. One data point among many to illustrate: almost one quarter of the Arctic icecap has disappeared in the past two years. Even if you disregard the claims of the more alarmist environmental scientists, this is a measurable event and rebuts those who claim there is no climate change. Whatever the cause – greenhouse gases, a spike in solar activity, or other – global warming will dramatically change the way we live.

Converging with climate change is the rapid depletion of the earth's natural resources. We are not oil geologists nor qualified to assess the validity of the "peak oil" theory. However, you don't have to be a scientist to observe the price of crude oil increasing almost geometrically, up about 50 percent over 2006. Since our economy – indeed, our whole way of life – is based on cheap, abundant oil, the squeeze in petroleum reserves and steep rise in costs will dramatically change the way we live.

The world's water supply is also shrinking, at least in relation to the demands of a growing population. Estimates are that by 2010, half the world's people will face severe shortages, leading to massive struggles over this indispensable resource. The Southeast, where we are located, generally has had ample water. Yet today it suffers from a drought of historic magnitude that, though it had been confined mostly to the lower and central South, is making its way north and east, toward the mid-Atlantic region.

Thanks to climate change and shortages of fuel and water, food supplies are falling and prices are spiraling. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), global grain reserves have reached their lowest level in three decades for which reporting data exist, and possibly their lowest in a century. There is only about a 45-day global grain reserve, and the National Farmers' Union of Canada warns that according to USDA data "...the world is consistently failing to produce as much grain as it uses. We are in the opening phase of an intensifying food shortage." That is, a worldwide shortage.

Many Americans, already reduced to living from paycheck to paycheck, are increasingly unable to stretch their dollars to the next payday as they juggle rising food and energy bills. "Too much month left at the end of the money" is beginning to affect middle-income working families as well as the poor. Food pantries, which distribute foodstuffs to the needy, are reporting severe shortages and reduced government funding at the very time they

are encountering a surge of new people seeking their help.

And what about the quality of the food we purchase? News accounts of polluted and sometimes deadly food imported from China and other foreign countries are a daily occurrence. And frankly, a lot of the food produced in the U.S. by the huge industrial "confined feeding operations" isn't

The Southeast, where we are located, generally has had ample water. Yet today it suffers from a drought of historic magnitude that is making its way north and east.

much better. Much of the animal protein we consume is laden with toxins, chemical additives, and powerful hormones which wreak havoc over the long term with the human organism.

Since much of what we consume has been emptied of nutrients and filled with toxins, it's no wonder we have an epidemic of diabetes, obesity, and chronic degenerative disease, which in turn heavily impacts a burdened health care system. Medical treatment is now one of the greatest expenses Americans face, potential or actual; and consequently one of the most divisive political issues in the country

Many Americans are increasingly unable to stretch their dollars to the next payday as they juggle rising food and energy bills. "Too much month left at the end of the money" affects middle-income working families as well as the poor.

More news from the real world

Sorry, but there's more bad news from the reality-based community. The average retail price of electricity shot up 10 percent last year, the largest jump in 25 years. The growing cost of electric

power highlights how dependent we are on this indispensable source of energy. It hardly needs stating that the national power grids are the lynchpins of our society's infrastructure. Any interruption for more than a week or two could precipitate a societal collapse; too much of our daily life support depends on electricity from the grid. Even the supply of piped natural gas is dependent on grid power, since it is used to run the compressors that pressurize gas pipelines. Yet the three national grids are cumbersome and antiquated, with too many complex interdependent parts for the system to right itself when something goes wrong, even in normal circumstances, as we have already seen in major regional blackouts. But the electricity system is now facing increasing threats from computer hackers and cyber-terrorists that could cause major disruptions and economic chaos, according to the Government Accountability Office.

These problems are largely beyond our individual control. But partial remedies, at least, are within our grasp. Our individual futures need not be utterly bleak; they can once again be full of promise and fulfillment, but only if we re-orient ourselves away from dependence on remote systems that require huge amounts of diminishing resources to maintain. We can take responsibility for our own necessities. We can learn and practice skills that will meet some if not all our most pressing physical needs — food, water, and energy.

We must first recognize that the systems we rely on for our very survival are highly centralized and industrial in nature. The electric power generation and distribution system is the classic example. Food production, mostly via big corporate agriculture's "factories in the field" concentrated in the hands of a tiny few, is another. Banking, credit, and the international system of payments also fit the paradigm. But we need not rely on distant, unaccountable corporate monoliths for all our basic needs. Once we realize this we can begin to transition from living according to the industrial economic model, toward a household economy model.

'Bankrupt'

Again, we're sorry, but there's more. The industrialized West is facing a meltdown in credit and equity markets. The response of the Federal Reserve is to pour even more liquidity – more "fiat" money – into the system, which weakens the dollar globally, while the U.S. government continues to spend money we don't have with reckless abandon. The trouble is, fiat currencies backed by nothing except public confidence are losing value, and they buy less and less. The once-mighty U.S. dollar has fallen to a record low against the euro. "The gap between future U.S. receipts and future U.S. government obligations now totals \$65.9 trillion, a sum that is impossible for the U.S. to reconcile, which means the U.S. is now technically bankrupt," said the *St. Louis Federal Reserve Review* (July/August 2006).

continued on page 23

* "Permaculture" and "sustainability" are related terms, even overlapping to a degree, but not synonymous. Permaculture is a design system for sustainable living and land use that was born from an awareness of resource limits, especially during the energy crises of the 1970s. The best-known name associated with the concept is Australian Bill Mollison, co-author (with David Holmgren, his then-research assistant) of the foundation text *Permaculture One*, published in 1978. The premise was to re-incorporate sound ecological principles in agriculture. Then the idea began to extend to re-looking at society as a whole using those same principles. Mollison followed in 1988 with *Designer's Manual*. More recently, David Holmgren's *Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability*, has become the authoritative text, taking the earlier ideas to a broader frame of reference, away from land management and practical agricultural issues toward dealing with the fundamental underlying principles of permaculture and its relationship to the reality of resource limits, especially peak energy. Permaculture has spread globally as a grassroots movement of activists and designers, teachers, land managers, gardeners and farmers; and is connected to a broad range of applications in sustainable building, alternative currency, eco-villages, and other diverse areas.

Vermont Vox Populi Collapse Happens/Exploring Options: An Interview with Lisa McCrory

Lisa McCrory and Carl Russell operate Earthwise Farm and Forest, based in Randolph, Vermont, which teaches a variety of skills for sustainable living, including the use of draft animals in raising organic crops. Their lifestyle and work model not only a broad knowledge of survival essentials, but an intimate connection with the earth and the non-human world. Mark your calendars now for the September 26-28, 2008, Northeast Animal Power Field Days, Trade Fair and Conference at Tunbridge Fairgrounds, where you can see Earthwise Farm and Forest in action. The interview was conducted for *Vermont Commons* by Carolyn Baker.

How long have the two of you lived in Vermont?

Carl Russell: I have been in Vermont my entire life. Our family is living and working on property that my grandparents purchased in 1938.

Lisa McCrory: I moved to Vermont in 1974 with my parents and siblings (from Wisconsin) and have lived here ever since.

What motivated you to become farmers?

CR: I grew up in the 1960-'70s, and in Vermont there were still many people who had small farms, raised their own food, worked in the woods, and lived self-employed, diversified lives. I was always drawn to animals, soil, and the forest, but I was also affected by an admiration for the sufficiency and independence that I saw in these farmers and woodsmen. Even though I worked on farms and in the woods, there were also trends toward playing sports, learning the ethic of commerce, and "hanging out." By the time I was out of college, the expectations were toward professional careers, credit cards, and car loans. The transition I made was mostly in the way of perspective. I remembered my desire for independence, purposeful work, outdoors, with soil, plants, and animals. So actually I interrupted the transition I might have made into the cultural norm.

LM: I was not raised on a farm, but when we moved to Vermont in the early '70s (I was 11 at the time) we did move to a place with a house, barn, a few acres and my parents allowed us to dabble in raising a few farm animals (riding horses, chickens, a goat and lamb) and have a vegetable garden. This was the time of my transition from city life to rural life. I have always been drawn to animals and the natural world and know that my calling is to be a steward of the land; to participate in a deeper understanding of the needs of the Earth and how to work co-creatively with the land, my family, our farm, and our local community. I pursued a degree in animal sciences and in the plant sciences knowing that one day I would have a farm where I would be growing most of my own food and living as closely to the land as possible.

What inspired you to begin using draft animals for farming, and what are some of the advantages and liabilities of using them?



Lisa McCrory and Carl Russell's two draft horses at Earthwise Farm and Forest in Randolph, Vermont. CREDIT: LISA MCCRORY

CR: There were people in my youth who worked horses or oxen, and I loved to see them working. As a young adult I had it in my mind that I would someday have a workhorse, but it seemed more like a hobby in a more modern lifestyle. In 1986 as I was preparing for self-employment as a forester/logger, I visited a man I had been buying logs from. He was a horse logger, and as I watched him perform what seemed to be a working dance with a living animal, I was awakened. I could see

In 1986 I visited a man I had been buying logs from. He was a horse logger, and as I watched him perform what seemed to be a working dance with a living animal, I was awakened.

— Carl Russell

the energy efficiency, the low impact, and the independence of low overhead. Most of all, I could see the craft, the expression, and the fulfillment. The drawbacks of draft animals are all related to experience and expectation. Learning how to care for them, and what to expect from them. It's all about time, time, and more time. It is continuous, laborious, slow work, with low cash flow. But it is very satisfying, and it puts into perspective what we are losing as a planet and a species by developing technologies that turn life into quick, easy projects. By using draft animals as our primary power, we lay hands on so many

aspects of our own lives.

LM: I started getting involved with draft animals when I met Carl in 2000, but this lifestyle has attracted me for quite some time and may have something to do with what brought us together. I have worked with horses and cows most of my youth and it has tied in nicely in my professional career as an organic livestock and grazing consultant.

Can you say more about the principles of stewardship that you encourage others to follow?

CR: So much of what we promote is craft. Stewardship is the art of managing land-based resources. Like any artist, the steward of land must learn the nuances of his/her medium, and learn to use tools and processes with finesse. The scientific process has helped us to see many important relationships that stewardship protects and cultivates. The drawback with scientific reasoning is a preconception that if we can't measure something, it has no value. If we don't know about it, it doesn't exist. We promote a highly intuitive process, where stewardship is about emotional investment, and personal responsibility. Do what you know is right, because you can feel it, and it makes you feel alive and connected to your surroundings.

LM: I think Carl said this nicely. The principles that we follow on our farm, on a practical level, are based upon organic farming principles: building our soil organic matter and balancing the soil nutrients so that the food we grow is nutritious for ourselves and our livestock. We also use biodynamic practices and products for some of our planting schedules and for composting our manure. Another part of our gardening and land

continued on following page

and Carl Russell of “Earthwise Farm & Forest” *By Carolyn Baker*

continued from previous page

management is the use of dowsing to plan our gardens and enhance the intuitive and spiritual connection we have with the land.

Can you speak about self-sufficiency’s trade-offs in your lives?

CR: The pluses include independence, personal fulfillment, and emotional and physical intimacy with soil, plants, and animals. The potential downsides: It is a lot of work, requiring time, knowledge, and commitment, and it interferes with professional careers and cash flow.

LM: I think that we are moving into a period where it is becoming increasingly important to KNOW how to grow one’s own food, process it, store it, and ultimately appreciate the bounty and build a connection with the land that we are farming. Building these skills is very satisfying, and there is always more to learn. With all the other things happening around us, sometimes we don’t have the time or cash flow to do everything that we would like to do, but this lifestyle encourages us to slow down – while some of our “off-the-farm” work asks us to turn things around quickly. It can be a “push-me-pull-you” kind of feeling and we need to check in regularly to prioritize what needs to get done on a daily basis.

Since 21st century young people are often strongly influenced by technology and the peer pressure of having cars, cell phones, i-pods, and other luxuries that they feel they can’t live without, how have your children reacted to self-sufficiency and your style of living off the land in such a simple, basic manner?

CR: It should be understood that we have cell phones, laptops, CD players, DVD/VCR-TV, and Game-boys. What our off-grid sustainable lifestyle does is put these things into a subclass of luxury and leisure. We teach our kids the language of our modern culture because it is necessary for them to function within their community. We do not shun modern culture, or try to hide from it, but we strive to teach our children the language of the Earth, about the spiritual and physical truths of human life on planet Earth. We entertain acquaintances as we process chickens, as many people seek our guidance with the skills of slaughtering and butchering their own animals for food. One day as I was removing entrails, our five-year old son cheered, “Chicken Livers!” Our visitor turned to me with a look of astonishment. “How many modern 5-year olds know enough about intestines to know where the liver is, and how many of them would be excited about eating it, especially after seeing where it comes from?”

LM: Although we do have all the things that Carl has listed above, we DO NOT have access to public or cable television, so are not heavily influenced by commercial advertising, the constant marketing targeted toward children, and the media-driven “news” that to me is about 20 percent news and 80 percent questionable. We watch movies

that we choose when it meets our schedule. We also home school our children, which we feel has been very rewarding for our children and for ourselves (ages three, five, and 10). That said, our 10-year-old is going to the public school for some electives (music, art, math, soccer, band). I think

We are moving into a period where it is becoming increasingly important to KNOW how to grow one’s own food, process it, store it, and ultimately build a connection with the land that we are farming. — Lisa McCrory

that our kids are very in touch with where their food comes from and what it takes to make that happen. We went to eat at a friend’s house not too long ago and our three-year-old started asking questions about the food on the table – “Did you kill this chicken?” and other questions like that. Our five-year-old was amazed to find out that this family did not have any farm animals and said, “You mean you don’t even have one cow?” Hilari-ous what comes out of the mouths of babes!

What are some of the principles you teach in your workshops?

LM: Our workshops are mostly about skills for earth-based livelihoods. The underlying principles come from within us, live craft-full, purpose-full, and care-full lives. If the lifestyle speaks to you, then follow your instincts. I encourage people to trust their intuition, and to learn to feel the anxi-

The only alternative energy we use on our farm is gasoline. All the other energy sources, sun, wind, plants, and animals are standard energies of the Earth. — Lisa McCrory

ety that comes from a good choice un-made. If a particular path is avoided because of a lack of skills, and we can help with teaching those skills, then maybe the path can be followed.

How often do you offer the workshops? How should people contact you if they are interested?

CR: People come to us to learn about designing and building their own homes, understanding off-grid power systems, composting toilets, and grey-water systems, on-farm slaughtering, bio-dynamic

practices, spiritual gardening, dowsing, forest management, grazing systems, food preparation, timber harvesting, and working draft animals. We recognize that perhaps the most valuable product of our farm is our experience. We do not promote ourselves as possessing the “Right Way.” We have skills, and we are glad to share them with people who value the learning. We entertain people on their own schedule, but from time to time we try to hold group gatherings to concentrate our efforts and to improve the experience through social engagement. People should contact us by phone (802) 234-5524, or by mail 341 MacIntosh Hill Rd., Randolph, VT 05060, or in person. We are not advertising, or trying to convince anyone. If we are on their path, then we’ll be here when they arrive.

What kind of alternative energy do you use on the farm?

LM: “Alternative Energy.” I’ve been waiting for this question. If you haven’t felt the paradigm shift yet, then maybe this will help. The only alternative energy that we use on our farm is gasoline. All the other energy sources, sun, wind, plants, and animals are standard energies of the Earth. “Alternative” is a term used by the people who manage “status quo.” It is part of a program on the mainframe of the Matrix. “Alternative” energy, medicine, agriculture, and lifestyles, are all truths that our culture cannot embrace at this time. I firmly believe that the success of a sustainable human culture depends on our recognizing the artificiality of the systems that prop up our modern lifestyles. Anyway, we use solar power from a small array of panels to make electricity, and electricity from a wind turbine also charges our battery bank. We are also dependent on a gasoline generator to back up the system, because like everybody else, we can use more electricity than we can make. This is where conservation can become a very valuable source of energy. Draft animals are the only power we use for farm and forestry work. Our lifestyle also depends on our personal physical and emotional energy, which are at the same time used and fueled by our intimate involvement in raising our own food. We believe in sobriety and conscious presence, and we use homeopathy and avoid the “Health Care System.” Our most abundant energy source comes from within us, and we revere it, protect it, and cultivate it.

How has the local community responded to you and your work? How have the utility companies responded?

CR: In the 1980s when I started practicing and learning skills that so many in my community had been convinced to discontinue, people definitely looked askance. To some my ambition seemed to be an affront to them, as if I knew better. My choices are not about improving on those made by others, so as I demonstrated my commitment of purpose and respect for those who knew more

continued on page 20

Free Vermont Media Meet Vermont Commons' (Emerging) 2008 Blogging Team

Editor's Note: During the past two months, we've encouraged a number of writers and thinkers to take up residence at our web site, and share with us their weekly musings on Vermont's future with a focus on politics, energy, food, agriculture, health care, media, and other vital 21st century issues. They've introduced themselves below. Many of our bloggers maintain their own blog sites. You can read their weekly commentaries at www.vtcommons.org/blog. If you are interested in joining our blogging roster to help us chart an independent 21st century Vermont republic, please e-mail us at webeditor@vtcommons.org.

Carolyn Baker/TRUTH TO POWER



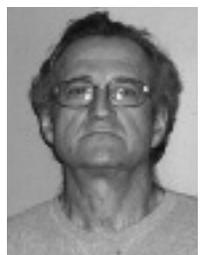
An adjunct professor of history and manager of the *Truth To Power* website at www.carolynbaker.net, Carolyn is also the former managing editor of *From The Wilderness* publications and author of *U.S. History Uncensored: What Your High School Textbook Didn't Tell You*. "I plan to move to the emerging Second Vermont Republic in spring 2008 and revel in your pervasive sustainability consciousness, your feisty independence, and yes, your long, cold winters," she writes. "Let's see, that would be about the time that the Real I.D. becomes law everywhere else but in Vermont?"

Gaelan Brown/THE ENERGY OPTIMIST



A native Vermonter from the Northeast Kingdom, Gaelan has lived abroad and in the southern and western United States for many years, but is more than happy to be permanently settled with his family in the beautiful Mad River Valley. He has a background in newspaper reporting, internet business development/consulting, and various sales and marketing roles, and has always been an avid student/promoter of renewable energy and alternatives to our current energy infrastructure. Currently he is a marketing manager for Green Mountain Coffee Roasters in Waterbury, where he enjoys furthering the company's mission to "change the way the world views business."

Richard Davis/HEALTH MATTERS



A registered Vermont nurse for the past 30 years, Richard Davis is the Vermont Citizens Campaign for Health executive director and has been involved in health care reform activities in Vermont for two decades. Richard has penned a weekly column on health care-related issues for the *Brattleboro Reformer* for the past 13 years (600 columns), and has published articles in a number of national nursing journals, including the *American Journal of Nursing*, *Home Healthcare Nurse*, and *Graduating Nurse*. Richard also served as the chair of the governor-appointed Vermont Commission on Public Health Care Values and Priorities from 1994-2002, serving as chair from 1999-2002.

Jane Dwinell and Dana Dwinell-Yardley/COMMON SENSE



Jane and Dana are a mother-daughter blog team of seventh- and eighth-generation Vermonter. "Our family has been living simply, sustainably, and self-reliantly for over twenty years," they observe. "We currently reside in an energy-efficient, owner-built homestead in downtown Montpelier (yes, really!). Send us your questions about food, fuel, financial, and family independence at our email address: mountaingirl@vtlink.net."

Carl Etnier/RELOCALIZING VERMONT



Since 2006, Carl has served as director of Peak Oil Awareness, an educational organization spreading knowledge about the timing and likely consequences of peak oil and policy alternatives. His career has been focused on various sustainability issues, mostly in water and wastewater. "Relocalizing Vermont" is about strengthening local production of food, energy, fiber, and materials, so we'll be better prepared for sharp reductions in global trade. It is also the name and theme of his weekly radio show on WGDR, Plainfield. Carl also writes a column, *Energy Matters*, which appears every other week in *The Times Argus* and *Rutland Herald*. He lives in East Montpelier with his wife, where they raise much of their food.

Gary Flomenhoff/THIRD WAY ECONOMICS



Currently a fellow at the Gund Institute for Ecological Economics and lecturer in Community Development and Applied Economics at UVM, Gary has served as a recreational specialist, aerospace engineer, anti-nuclear activist, environmental consultant, solar installer, Green Party organizer, electric vehicle builder, and HUD bureaucrat, as well as studying under Herman Daly and finding wisdom in the work of Henry George.

Jim Hogue/ETHAN ALLEN



"I blog for *Vermont Commons*," writes Jim, "because few other media sources will cover the topics to which I have access via my WGDR Plainfield weekly radio program – specifically, personal contacts with Sibel Edmonds, David Ray Griffin, and others in a growing global movement to hold the United States government accountable or separate from it." Jim has performed and directed for regional, community, and educational theater since 1971, in Vermont with *Lost Nation Theater*, *Ice Fire*, *The Skinner Barn*, and *Unadilla Theater*, and has appeared in several films. Jim also has written 10 plays and created two one-man shows: *Cabaret Shakespeare* and, now playing, *The Gods of the Hills* from *The Narrative of Colonel Ethan Allen*. He has performed as Ethan Allen at Vermont History Expo, Faneuil Hall in Boston, Independence Hall in Philadelphia, and various locations in Vermont.

J. Arthur Loose/FORGING AHEAD



"I'm an artist inspired by history and mythology," explains J. Arthur. "When I first read the Neo-Conservative Project for a New American Century's manifesto *Rebuilding America's Defenses* and saw the phrase 'Pax Americana,' I understood immediately – in the words of one defeated Caledonian chieftain – 'To robbery, slaughter, plunder, they give the lying name of Empire; they create a desert and call it peace.' I hope to encourage others to recognize that Vermont truly has the wisdom, the foresight, and the accountability to govern herself openly, honestly and justly, above and apart from the greed, the wars and Orwellian deception that is the modus operandi of the self-proclaimed American Empire."

Robin McDermott/LOCALVORE LIVING



Robin McDermott is co-founder of the Mad River Valley Localvore Project and is a member of the Vermont Fresh Network Board of Directors. She lives in Waitsfield, where she and her husband run a web-based training business.

Carol Moore/SECEDE AND SURVIVE



"I've been working on making a revolution in consciousness, personal and political, for forty years," writes Carol. "I consider myself a feminist, libertarian decentralist and pacifist, and engage the world as an activist, writer, songwriter and video producer." Check out CarolMoore.net and Secession.net for Carol's vision, including of independent communities and cities networking and confederating regionally.

Greg Nixon/GREEN MOUNTAIN 9/11 TRUTH TALK



"I am a 9/11 activist and private military contractor/terror drill researcher living in Burlington," explains Greg. "If anything calls for an independent Vermont, it would be the mass murder of Americans by a criminal junta in Washington D.C. My blog is a weekly expose on the Military/Industrial/Terror Complex and the scam of the 9/11 attacks as allegedly perpetrated by Arab terrorists." Read more at (<http://dailydoseofterror.blogspot.com/>).

Susan Ohanian/BACK TO BASICS



Susan is a longtime teacher. Her 23 books on education include *One Size Fits Few: The Folly of Education Standards* and *Why Is Corporate America Bashing Our Public Schools*. Susan's website in opposition to high-stakes tests and NCLB - www.susanohanian.org - won the NCTE George Orwell Award. Susan and her husband fly the Second Vermont Republic flag when they sail Lake Champlain •

Think Outside.



Sterling College

WORKING HANDS ♦ WORKING MINDS

www.sterlingcollege.edu

Celebrate Local Abundance



We Do!

The largest selection of locally grown & produced products in the Mad River Valley

Village Square, Waitsfield, Route 100 • (802) 496-7763



WWW.VTVEGCAR.COM

FULL CIRCLE
AUTOMOTIVE

Central Vermont's Leading Specialists

Volkswagens • TDIs • Custom Vegetable Fuel Systems

4631 MAIN STREET • WAITSFIELD, VT 05673 • 802.496.9236

Localvore Living In Winter, The Key Is Preparation *By Robin McDermott*

It's early February, temperatures are in the 10s and 20s, there is a foot or more of snow blanketing the veggie garden.

What's a Localvore to eat?

Despite what dedicated local eaters in warmer climates may think, Vermonters *can* survive on a totally local diet even in the dead of winter and live to tell about it come summer. After all, that's what people in Vermont did when the state was first settled, and in large part up until 60 years ago when food started to become an industrialized commodity.

To eat a mostly local diet in the winter does take some planning. The earlier in the growing season that you begin that planning, the better you will eat in the winter. Many people start thinking about what they will eat in the winter in October as the gardens start to die back and the end of the garden season becomes a cold reality. But, folks who start planning so late in the season are going to be eating a lot of root vegetables and winter squashes.

June is when the instinct for surviving on local food in the winter needs to really kick in. One approach might be to double up on many veggies that you buy at the farmer's market and plan to eat one portion now and preserve the other portion for the winter. Sure, it costs twice as much, but come winter, many days you will be eating for free. Lots of great veggies freeze really well with a little pre-freeze preparation. Other vegetables can be canned; high-acidity foods such as tomatoes or fruits are the easiest because they can be safely put up with a simple water bath method. Then there are more traditional preservation techniques such as lacto-fermentation (think sauerkraut and kim-

chi) and drying, which use less energy than freezing or canning and often provide a more nutritious ingredient than the raw vegetables or fruits alone.

One of the biggest challenges people face eating

Many people start thinking about what they will eat in the winter in October as the gardens start to die back, but folks who start planning so late are going to be eating a lot of root vegetables and winter squashes.

locally in Vermont in the winter is salads. However, there are actually plenty of satisfying alternatives once an eater gets past the bias that a salad

has to consist of tender greens and tomatoes. Delicious, crunchy and fresh-tasting salads can be made with cabbage, carrots, apples, daikon radishes, salad turnips, celeriac, and rutabaga, many which can be stored until early spring if handled properly.

Of course, for meat eaters eating local year round is even easier, with a wide variety of local poultry, pork, lamb, and beef readily available in local co-ops and many grocery stores. Eggs also make a nutritious and cost-effective meal, not just for breakfast but for lunch and dinner, too.

Becoming a year-round Localvore is actually easy once you change some ingrained ways of thinking that have been propagated by our industrial food system. By eating more like Vermonters did 100 years ago, we not only support our local economy and keep our neighborhood farmers in business, but we also gain a much better appreciation for what each season has to offer for our tables. •



Airing Our Laundry: How will the citizens of Vermont "power" our collective future? CREDIT: ANNALISA PARENT

Subscribe to *Vermont Commons*

Get *Vermont Commons* delivered right to your door and stay on top of the issues that will shape Vermont's future.

- One Year (6 issues) \$25 (\$30 overseas)

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

Phone _____

Send check to: Vermont Commons • P.O. Box 1121
Waitsfield, VT 05673 or subscribe online at
www.vtcommons.org.

71-73 Main Street • Randolph, Vermont 05060 • 802-728-6464



Chandler Center for the Arts is a community-based arts organization in Randolph, VT serving Central Vermont and the Upper Valley region with a year-round series of performances, art exhibits and educational opportunities in historic Chandler Music Hall and Gallery. Montpelier, Woodstock, Norwich and Hanover, NH are all within an easy half hour drive. Performances by world-renowned musicians, special projects celebrating the talent of local musicians and actors and an eclectic series of gallery exhibits are made possible by generous support from individuals, businesses and foundations.

www.chandler-arts.org

Celebrating 100 Years
Chandler!
 Where the arts & community meet

- Arlo Guthrie** — the iconic folk legend returns to Chandler
Friday February 1, 7:30pm
- Natalie MacMaster** — Cape Breton fiddler and stepdancer extraordinaire! **February 26 & 27, 7:30pm**
- Mini-Mud** — celebrate young local talent in the region
Friday March 7, 7:00pm
- The Chiara String Quartet** premieres new music by Erik Nielsen
Saturday March 15, 7:30pm
- Cab Calloway Orchestra** — hot Harlem Renaissance jazz
Friday March 28, 7:30pm



Orwell, Vermont
802-948-2288

Located 3 miles south of Fort Ticonderoga on historic Lake Champlain, this full service marina is complemented by two century old brick & stone warehouses. Our deep water facility is well worth a visit. Stop in, have an ice cream cone and enjoy the gorgeous lake setting.

SEASONAL/DAILY SLIPS, MAST STEPPING, GASOLINE, WATER, CAMPSITES, LAUNDRY, ICE, SHOWERS, PUMPOUT, SHUTTLE

Building Community One Book at a Time

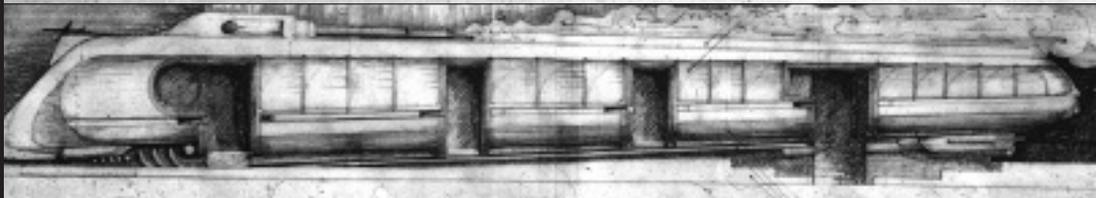


NORTHSHIRE BOOKSTORE

BOOKS ■ Music ■ Vermont-made Gifts ■ Toys ■ DVDs ■ Games
 New & Used ■ Print-on-Demand Machine ■ Events ■ Café

OPEN 10 AM DAILY Hours Jan-June: Thur-Sat till 9 PM & Sun-Wed till 7 PM July-Dec: TUES-Sat till 9 PM & Sun/Won till 7 PM
 802-362-2200/800-437-3700 Rtes. 7A & 11/30 Manchester, Vermont
www.northshire.com

Designs for Bart Merle-Smith's Hot Tub Emporium 2 in Burlington Vermont. This space ship in an enormous warehouse has private hot tub spa compartments in each car that are designed to transport one to another world. Such as "Krypton, Superman' birth planet"



ARCHITECTURE, NATURAL MATERIALS, INDUSTRIAL DESIGN AND THE ART OF LIVING.

Sustainable community designs • Artistic, creative solutions to everyday life • Public places as extensions of local art, craft and materials



Smart house, totally disconnected from the grid "Treemoonus" on Lake Winnepesaukee

Sellers

SELLERS AND COMPANY ARCHITECTS
 2 Brook Road, Warren, VT 05674 • 802-496-2787

Parent Studios

Now scheduling weddings and portraits

www.parentstudios.com
 photographer@parentstudios.com



The Greenneck Reflections On Vermont While on a Florida Bicycle Ride

It is early morning in January 2008, and the GN is pedaling his bicycle through the Florida Everglades.

Back home in Vermont, a run of powder days not seen since, well, last season, is coming to a close.

In Florida, near-record cold has swept across the state, and the GN shivers as he pedals, a cold breeze whipping through his shirt. One of his great loves is deep powder skiing, and here he is, in Florida, riding a bicycle with goose bumps on his ass. It is almost more irony than he can bear.

He exits the park on Route 9633, now warm, turning over the big ring at a pretty good clip. He's not fit, but like all roads in Florida, this one is flat, and now the wind is at his back. The knobby tires of his mountain bike make a whirring noise on the tarmac.

Now the broad expanse of farm fields outside the town of Homestead. Row upon row of black plastic spread across the thin, pallid soil. At the edge of each field, row upon row of battered passenger vans to carry the immigrant workers that tend the crops. Yesterday, he'd seen a tractor-

trailer carrying some strange fruit; it was round and green and about the size of tomatoes and by god it was tomatoes and they were green because of course that's how they pick 'em, green and hard so they travel well. Later, they'll be coaxed

After the fall there will be no better place to ride than the green hills of Vermont, where we already have so much of what our countrymen and women will need.

red with ethylene and sold to a public that's either disinterested, ignorant, or both.

It has been a good trip. On Christmas, they were the sole occupants of a campground in the Ocala National Forest. They went kayaking, saw otter and egrets and turtles. The boys opened their

meager loot on the bed he built into the back of the travelin' van. Later, they cooked chicken over a fire. It didn't feel lonely or bereft. It felt like life lived on their terms.

And it has reaffirmed what he already thought about home, which is this: The future of this once-great country is balanced on a precipice. When and how it falls is unknown to most, and certainly to a simple man pedaling his bicycle through a cold Florida morning. But of the concrete truths he can count, the most obvious is that there will be no better place to ride that tumble than the green hills of Vermont, where we already have so much of what our countrymen and women will need. Interconnectedness. Ingenuity. Modest expectations. Modesty. Florida, like much of the U.S., is severely deficient in these qualities.

At some point in your life, if you are lucky, you feel connected to a place and a place's people. Does it choose you, or do you choose it? He does not know, but he is grateful to feel that connection, even as the first bead of sweat drops off his sun-burned nose and falls through the cool Florida air. •

Chelsea Green – for 24 years,
the publishing leader for books on sustainable living

Recently Released
& Forthcoming...



Climate Solutions
Peter Barnes
\$9.95 • Paperback



Exposed
Mark Schapiro
\$22.95 • Hardcover



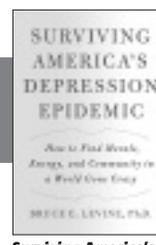
Mad Sheep
Linda Faillace
\$17.95 • Paperback
\$25.00 • Hardcover



Sharing the Harvest
Elizabeth Henderson
with Robyn Van En
\$35.00 • Paperback



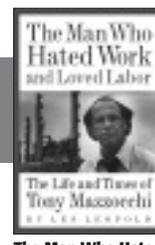
The War on Bugs
Will Allen
\$35.00 • Paperback



**Surviving America's
Depression Epidemic**
Bruce E. Levine, PhD
\$16.95 • Paperback



Javatrekker
Dean Cycon
\$19.95 • Paperback



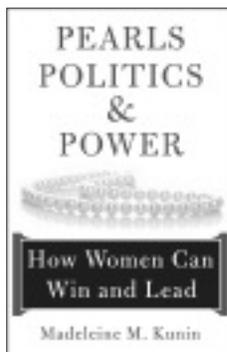
**The Man Who Hated
Work and Loved Labor**
Les Leopold
\$24.95 • Paperback
\$40.00 • Hardcover



Green Up
Your Life!

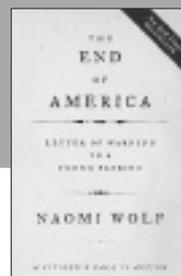
These compact, value-priced guides are packed with hundreds of tips that will improve the environment and your finances.

**Chelsea Green
Guide Series**
\$7.95 each • Paperback



PEARLS POLITICS & POWER
By Governor *Madeline M. Kunin*
\$14.95 • Paperback | \$24.95 • Hardcover
Coming in March

"Here's the book we've been waiting for—an insider's view of the role of women in politics by one of America's most distinguished public servants."
—Robert Reich



THE END OF AMERICA
National Best Seller
By Naomi Wolf
\$13.95 • Paperback

"One of the most important books that's been written... in my lifetime."
—Thom Hartmann

Available at your local bookstore or at
www.chelseagreen.com
Call 800.639.4099

**CHELSEA
GREEN
PUBLISHING**
the politics and practice of sustainable living

802.295.6300 • White River Junction, VT



Countdown to the Real Education Crisis

THE VSSE AWARDS FOR 2007:

In trying to answer the question of which is worse—politics or bureaucracy, a panel of judges at the Vermont Society for the Study of Education finds that flapdoodle from Vermont's own state department of education and state legislature swamps all competition from the federal government—for the moment.

Here are the top ten education follies inflicted on the residents of Vermont in 2007:

1. **The Study Commission to Study the Studies of the Study Commissions Award** – After failing to take action on studies of cost drivers conducted in 2004, 2002, and 2001, the legislature formed a 2007 study committee to study why education costs are going up.
2. **The Don't Think at All Award** – Euphemistically called "Think Twice," Sen. Peter Shumlin and Rep. Gaye Symington came up with "It's not a cap, cap." This law requires citizens to vote twice on school budgets that exceed limits. One legislator explained, "We think it is obvious that the voters that elected us are too dumb to analyze their own school budgets."
3. **Government Efficiency Award** – The Education Commissioner informed the legislature that the report on the "Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Department of Education" will be late.
4. **Getting the Public Out of Public Education Award** – By requiring that any combined spring and winter break occur during town meeting week, state education chair Don Collins' cumbersome statewide calendar law assures parent absenteeism from annual school meetings.
5. **The Crisis in Government Award** – Unable to resist any ornament, Rep. Kilmartin's ten-page early education law mandates task forces, study commissions, reports, evaluations and accreditations. This confused, inconsistent and hopelessly bureaucratic law solves a problem that didn't exist. Recognition goes to education chairs Don Collins and Janet Ancel for condoning this cacophonous, conflict of complete confusion.
6. **"Just how many students are there anyway?" Award** – To correct their inability to count students, the state shortened the number of days students are counted from 40 to 20. "By counting less, we don't have to reconcile different numbers," state department staff assured the legislature. In order to maximize accuracy, several legislators suggested we quit counting entirely. State education department officials retorted that their counters were well trained by the tax department.
7. **Repealing the Law of Gravity Award** – Proving themselves lightweights who float on their own hot air, the House Education Committee abolished the normal curve. While lamenting low scores on problem solving skills, they found that no district needs to spend over 20% above the state average in special education.
8. **The Blame the Victim Award** – After commissioning an out-of-state independent study showing federal mandates drive Vermont school costs up 20%, the Vermont legislature ignored unfunded mandates and ordered local districts to control spending.
9. **The Total Irrelevance Award** – After seven years of completing its agenda items of pledging the flag, calling the roll, hearing the public announcements and the consent agenda, the state education board now defines a vision for Vermont education. Garnished with empty-headed jargon and platitudes, the board proposes five solutions without a problem.
10. **Beat the Dead Horse Harder Award** – Rather than receiving assistance, "failing schools," which can be identified by: (1) the percent poverty, (2) lesser amounts spent per pupil, and (3) the number of minority groups, are punished with extra bureaucracy and, ultimately, face take-over by the state. Governor Douglas, Commissioner Cate and the state board jointly earned this award.

Sid Glassner, Executive Director of the Vermont Society for the Study of Education can be reached at essmont@comcast.net

Strong, continued from page 1

#1 Non-Profit Organizations

Have you seen the sister publications recently out from the Vermont Council on Rural Development? Go download a copy and behold some real reasons for hope (<http://www.vtrural.org/reports-councils.php>). The first, issued in April of 2007, is entitled *The Vermont Energy Digest* and provides an inventory of Vermont renewable energy and energy efficiency measures already in place, as well as some thoughts about developing more of the same from our very own fields, streams, sun, wind, and smarts.

The second, *Strengthening Vermont's Energy Economy*, came out last August and reports on dozens of energy-related recommendations generated by a slew of the state's best energy, business, and policy minds during a year-long process of talking, thinking, and writing. Meaty, powerful stuff (with recommendations like increasing Vermont's net-metering limits and the development of a clean energy workforce-education program) and quite possibly the best roadmap we have for ensuring that Vermont's energy future unfolds intentionally and with the prosperity and sustainability of Vermont's communities in mind. Amen.

A quick rundown on some of the many organizations up to good things: The Vermont Energy Investment Corporation is as busy as ever delivering the all-important and award-winning Efficiency Vermont program, whose efforts are meeting roughly 5.3 percent of Vermont's energy requirements and cutting the state's annual electric load growth by two-thirds. The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund continues to foster the in-state, on-farm biofuels sector. Renewable Energy Vermont is hard at work at the statehouse, bringing the growing influence of Vermont renewable energy businesses to bear on the decision-making process. Other groups pursuing their distinct angle on Vermont's energy challenges: the Alliance for Climate Action, the Biomass Energy Resource Center, the Conservation Law Foundation, the Sustainable Energy Resource Group, the Vermont Biofuels Association, Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility, the Vermont Campus Energy Group, the Vermont Earth Institute, the Vermont Environmental Consortium, Vermont Interfaith Power & Light, the Vermont Natural Resources Council, and the Vermont Public Interest Research Group.

#2 Businesses

If you want to see who's leading the charge toward a more hopeful Vermont energy future, look no further than Vermont's business pioneers. Not only are many of them making good products, providing important services, and creating meaningful and attractive workplaces, but they are doing it with an eye toward reducing their environmental impact and energy costs, while increasing their odds of success in a rapidly expanding "green" marketplace.

The flagship among them is the NRG Systems, Inc. in Hinesburg. When this manufacturer of measurement equipment for the wind energy industry needed to build a new facility in 2004, they did it with both kinds of green in mind:



In August 2007, the Vermont Public Service Board granted a Certificate of Public Good for a 16-turbine, 40-megawatt wind electric-generation project proposed by UPC-Vermont Wind, to be sited in Sheffield. It was the first wind project approved by the PSB since Green Mountain Power's much smaller Searburg project (pictured here) in 1997. All of the power generated at Sheffield would be sold to Vermont utilities.

Through the use of renewable energy, a super-insulated structure, energy efficient windows, lighting and equipment, and a climate control system that optimizes energy performance, their green building uses a quarter of the energy that conventional buildings use. "We spent more money to build our facility green, but we see it as a long-term investment that will more than pay for itself in terms of productivity gains and energy and operating cost savings," NRG's founder David Blittersdorf told *In Business* magazine. "We have essentially prepaid our energy bill by relying on

"We have essentially prepaid our energy bill by relying on renewable energy and, as a result, we won't have to worry about rising energy costs in the future." David Blittersdorf, NRG Systems, Inc.

renewable energy and, as a result, we won't have to worry about rising energy costs in the future."

Other businesses making a dent in their energy use, climate change, and the bottom line:

Main Street Landing – This environmentally and socially conscious Burlington-based property developer built the first, and so far, only, LEED-certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) commercial/rental and performing arts center in Vermont. The fact that this is commercial space means they had to plan wisely and couldn't break the bank to gain their green certification. Otherwise, their tenants wouldn't be able

to afford the rents.

Otter Creek Brewing – Does beer make you smarter? It must. Otter Creek Brewing, which has been using biodiesel to make the steam necessary for cooking the grains at its Middlebury brewery, is taking its energy initiative to the next level: The company is studying the question of whether it makes sense to burn the brewery's generated waste grain to make steam, thus using beer to make beer. Cool.

Lake Champlain Chocolates – When this Burlington confectioner needed to expand, it refurbished an old building and used the latest green technologies in the process: energy efficient skylights and windows, high insulation values for the walls and roof, low-emitting materials, water-efficient plumbing fixtures, increased ventilation effectiveness, using FSC-certified finished woods, designating recycling and bike rack areas, and recycling building materials during construction. The building is 27 percent more energy efficient than one built to code, and costs 42 percent less to operate.

Gardener's Supply Company – This long-time sustainability leader, headquartered in Burlington, is taking a hard look at its carbon emissions and doing something about getting them down. They've contracted local firms to help them assess their carbon footprint and energy usage from top to bottom, and are installing better lighting, equipment, and processes in an on-going effort to reduce their environmental impact.

And then there are the Vermont providers of these all-important clean-energy services and technologies, busy providing tools, services and resources, while creating economic opportunities for our citizens: groSolar, NRG Systems, Draker

continued on following page

continued from previous page

Laboratories, Solar Works, Kilowatt Technologies, Cx Associates, to name a few. Some of Vermont's 22 electric utilities aggressively pursuing green and reliable energy sources: Burlington Electric Department, Central Vermont Public Service, Green Mountain Power, and Washington Electric Cooperative.

#3 Initiatives

The spirit of grassroots activism is alive and kicking on Vermont's energy front. The Vermont Climate and Energy Action Network (www.vnrc.org/article/view/9452/1/625), a collaboration of several Vermont non-profit and membership-based organizations – is working with dozens of communities to jump-start their sustainable energy organizing efforts. VECAN's reader-friendly *Town Energy and Climate Action Guide* provides a step-by-step process for establishing a community energy committee, while offering a list of state and local resources, funding sources, model bylaws, and more. Some of the communities already on the move with VECAN's help: Norwich, Bennington, Thetford, Hardwick, and Greensboro.

Other important energy-related initiatives from around the state:

The Vermont 25x'25 Initiative aims to sustainably derive at least 25 percent of Vermont's total energy needs from renewable sources by the year 2025, mainly – but not exclusively – from our farm and forest resources. (http://www.25x25.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1)

The Vermont Apollo Alliance is a franchise of the national Apollo Alliance, and is made up of organizations from the Vermont environmental, labor, business, agriculture, social justice, and community sectors working together to promote quality jobs and energy independence for Vermont. (<http://www.apollochallenge.org/vermont/about.html>)

The Governor's Commission on Climate Change recently delivered its set of recommendations for reducing the state's contribution to climate change to Governor Douglas. These are solid recommendations, most of which will also serve the purpose of reducing Vermont's need for additional energy generation. (<http://www.vtclimatechange.us/gccc.cfm>)

#4 Heroes

There are those folks who have taken a reasonable amount of concern for Vermont's energy future and kicked it up a notch or two. Take Bob Walker, for example. Bob runs the Sustainable Energy Resource Group out of Thetford Center, and he's bringing his clean energy fervor to the people in the form of home weatherization workshops, town energy committee organizing, discounts on renewable systems, residential energy assessment services, CFL sales, renewable energy workshops, and all-around energy education. And Annie Dunn Watson, who is actively spreading the word on peak oil, localization, and clean energy through her work with the Vermont Peak Oil Network. Annie is herself a force of nature whose energy we'd be wise to harness.

Of course, there is Vermont's own Bill McKibben, who has done more than his share to

understand and spread the word about the perils of climate change, and who avails himself to Vermont audiences everywhere to share his learning and international perspective, testify at our Statehouse on the topic of clean energy, and create clarification calls to action – such as 2006's five-day march from Ripton to Burlington.

Others Vermonters making their clean energy mark are Elizabeth Courtney of VNRC, Robert Ide of the Vermont Department of Public Service, Netaka White of the Vermont Biofuels Association, Ellen Kahler of the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, Chuck Ross of Senator Leahy's office, Andrew Perchlik of Renewable Energy Vermont, Paul Costello of Vermont Council on Rural Development, Deb Sachs of the Alliance on Climate Action, and Peter Shumlin and Vince Illuzzi – both from our state legislature. Finally, our federal congressional delegation is a clean energy advocate's dream team: Senators Leahy and Sanders and Representative Welch all get it, and are working hard to make it happen.

#5 State Policies

There has been a lot of good legislation coming out of the statehouse in recent years, but unless you're paying attention you might miss it. Some positive moves: the Clean Energy Development Fund, the Solar and Small Wind Incentive Program, and the Sustainably Priced Energy Enter-

Otter Creek Brewing is studying whether it makes sense to burn the brewery's generated waste grain to make steam, thus using beer to make beer.

prise Development (SPEED) Program. Vermont's policies supporting renewables may not be as aggressive as, say, New Jersey's, but we are small, nimble, and holding our own – if not exceeding the efforts of most states. Unfortunately, holding our own no longer cuts it, so last year's legislators crafted one of the nation's most innovative energy policies, which – along with several other good ideas – would have created an all-fuels efficiency utility, doing for heating fuels what Efficiency Vermont currently does for electricity. Nearly everybody agreed on the concept and the differences came down to how to pay for it.

This session, keep your eyes on Senate Bill No. 339, brought to you by energy visionaries Sens. Ginny Lyons and Hinda Miller, and now in draft form. Entitled the Energy Independence and Rural Economic Development Act, the bill holds just about everything clean energy and money-saving advocates could want. Chief among the proposals is a Clean Energy Coordinating Council that will help make renewable energy and energy efficiency programs a reality, while looking at alternative clean energy funding methods, such as carbon taxation.

Senate President Peter Shumlin has vowed that energy and the environment will again top his

party's 2008 legislative agenda, recently telling the *Burlington Free Press* that Vermonters “spend more than the state's entire education budget for heating fuel and gasoline.” More good news: Governor Douglas's Commission on Climate Change (mentioned above) also recommended that an all-fuels efficiency utility concept be implemented.

Very little energy policy would be put into motion without the hard work of the Vermont Department of Public Service, which represents the public interest in matters regarding energy and other areas. These good and smart people negotiate our energy contracts, promote energy efficiency in the state, provide long-term planning, and administer many of the projects, programs, and initiatives that are Vermont's best reasons for hope.

#6 Projects

The Vermont Public Service Board's conditional approval of the UPC-Vermont Wind electric-generation project proposed in Sheffield, which grabbed headlines last year as commercial-scale wind energy in Vermont tends to do. The big story was this: This wind farm – with 40 MW of installed capacity and 16 wind turbines providing renewable power for 15,000 to 20,000 Vermont homes – would be the first commercial wind farm to get the state's nod since the construction of the Searsburg project in 1997. A victory in itself, but the hope is that this project will break what appears to be a logjam on commercial-scale wind development in the state.

On the opposite end of the energy-producing spectrum, construction continues on the South Farm Homes housing development located in Hinesburg. These six homes incorporate passive and active solar features, geothermal energy systems, and the latest in insulating and energy efficiency technologies. The goal of the homes when all the systems are in place (including a wind turbine that will provide for the whole development) is that they will be net-zero energy residences, producing as much (or more) energy than they use over the course of a year. Might this set the bar for all new home construction in Vermont?

#7 Ideas

Over the last year, with the twin specters of high energy prices and a warming landscape staring us down, dozens of ideas have emerged for how to solve our energy woes – some homegrown and some from away, some half-baked and some crisped to a golden brown. Our strength as a people is adapting what works well elsewhere to our own backyard. Here are some that might apply:

Zero-Energy Homes in California. Last fall, California energy regulators adopted an ambitious first-of-its-kind rule, making it a goal that, through energy efficiency and renewable energy, all new homes built after 2020 produce as much energy as they consume. By 2030, all new commercial construction will be subject to the same requirement. Considering the vision of the South Farm Homes project described above, could Vermont be close behind?

Community-Supported Renewable Energy. Much like community-supported agriculture, communities across the country are growing increas-

continued on following page

continued from previous page

ingly interested in taking their energy destinies into their own hands by financing and building clean energy projects that benefit the communities themselves. Burlington Electric Department's McNeil Generating Station, a woodchip-burning plant, is a great example of this concept – much of it bought and paid for by Burlington taxpayers. Dozens of Vermont communities are currently exploring similar ideas that involve community-scale renewable energy projects.

Boulder Carbon Tax. The city of Boulder, Colorado approved the first-in-the-nation municipal carbon tax in 2006. The tax, assessed on residents and businesses based on the amount of electricity they use, increases monthly residential bills by about \$1.33 for homes and \$3.80 for businesses. The tax generates about \$1 million annually, which is used to fund energy efficiency services and products for Boulder's homes and businesses.

Much like community-supported agriculture, communities across the country are growing increasingly interested in taking their energy destinies into their own hands by financing and building clean energy projects that benefit the communities themselves.

Feed-In Tariffs. These laws require utilities to purchase electricity from renewable energy installations, but make it relatively easy on them to do so by guaranteeing a good and stable price for the renewable energy. According to *Renewable Energy Access*, Germany's Feed-In Tariff laws has made that nation a world leader in renewable energy, generated billions of dollars a year in exports, created a quarter of a million jobs, saved about 100 million tons of CO2 annually in recent years, and set records for installed capacity across many technologies. All this for a monthly cost of around \$1.80 per household.

#8 Vermont's Colleges and Universities

Vermont's campuses have been hot beds for activism for generations, and clean energy issues are now hitting the campus prime time spot. Middlebury College might be the premier example, committing itself to carbon neutrality, installing a wind turbine, and building the soon-to-be-operational biomass-fired central heating and power plant. And, of course, Middlebury students helped spawn the influential grassroots Step It Up movement. Other Vermont campuses also on the track: Champlain College is busy assessing its carbon footprint and implementing energy efficiency measures; Green Mountain College has established a greening fund and is putting it to work; the University of Vermont has built what may be the first LEED-certified student center in the nation; and Green Mountain College, Goddard College, Middlebury, and UVM have signed onto the College and University President's Climate Commitment – along with about 450 other U.S. campuses – putting them on a clear path toward achieving carbon neutrality.

#9 Natural Resources

We are blessed in Vermont with many things, one of them being plentiful renewable energy resources, and another being the energy ethic and smarts to (1) use less energy in the first place and (2) use our available resources sustainably. Our forests and farms are perhaps our most significant near-term resource. Some estimates indicate that we could derive nearly 20 percent of Vermont's total energy needs from these two sources, particularly if some of the latest technologies such as algae-derived biodiesel and cellulosic ethanol, deliver as promised. The winds on our ridge tops could also provide 10 percent-20 percent of our electricity needs, according to a 2006 VPIRG study. Despite our reputation for gray days, the sun is perhaps our greatest resource: Enough sun hits the average house roof in Vermont to supply 10 times the electricity used by the average homeowner. The trick is in harnessing it economically. Geothermal and in-state hydroelectricity do – and will continue to – have an important role to play. And, as always, conservation and efficiency may be our greatest and most cost-effective energy assets: A recent study from the Vermont Department of Public Service estimated that cost-effective energy savings could be as high as 19 percent of projected electricity sales in the year 2015.

#10 You

Consider these facts from Energy Information Administration, keeper of all things statistical and energy-related in the U.S.:

Total energy consumption in Vermont is the lowest of any state in the nation.

Vermont has one of the lowest per-capita energy uses in the U.S., placing us 42 out of 50.

Vermont is one of only two states in the country with no coal-fired power plants.

What accounts for our impressive energy track record? Yankee frugality? Innovative efficiency programs, smart utilities, thoughtful policymakers, communities, and citizens' collectives? An inherent understanding of the connection between energy use, the environment, and quality of life? A deep-seated memory of the importance of energy self-reliance without isolation? A steady diet of real maple syrup?

Probably some combination of all of these things. In other words: You. You are the thoughtful and committed citizen that is the fundamental thread of this Vermont fabric. In your daily actions and interactions, you are making the decisions that have shaped our energy past and will chart its future. You are the biggest reason for our energy hope going forward.

What's Next

Vermont does not lack for smart ideas, good planning, committed organizations, and human energy. If anything's missing, it's an energy *vision* for Vermont, something that pulls it all together – an overarching articulation and process that distills all of these good but disparate elements together into a coherent blueprint that we can all agree on – or at least compromise around. We need a vision that accounts for our economy, our health, our security, our values, and our identity. Maybe it's too tall an order. Maybe it's wishful thinking.

Or maybe it's coming in 2008, an outgrowth of all that we're doing, all that we are, and all we hope to be. •

Vermont Independence Gear!



Buttons, lapel pins, bumper stickers, and T-shirts.



All proceeds go to support this newspaper.

Available at www.vtcommons.org/store.

BIGPICTURE

— CAFÉ ★ THEATER —

A LOCAL GATHERING PLACE WITH A GLOBAL DIMENSION



Fresh food made with lots of local ingredients!

***HUEVOS RANCHEROS..... \$8.00**
Two sunny-side up eggs with spicy black beans & potatoes, fresh salsa, lime sour cream & a grilled flour tortilla.
"Best huevos rancheros east of the Mississippi." BURLINGTON FREE PRESS *Available "Eugene Style" - super spicy, sans carbs.

STACK O' FLAPJACKS..... \$5.50
Three cakes with VT Maple Syrup.

STEAK & EGGS..... \$10.00
Served with toast & home fries.

JAPANIMATION..... \$8.00
Vegetarian Nori roll with carrot, red & yellow peppers & cucumbers. Served with Asian cole slaw, wasabi & pickled ginger.

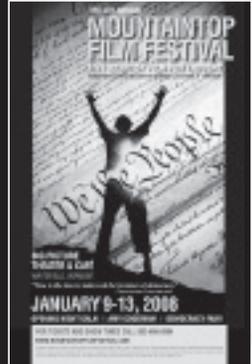
JALAPEÑO POPPERS..... \$5.00
Straight out of spicy town! House made with lime cilantro sour cream.

FALAFEL PLATTER..... \$12.00
Everything is 100% house made in this dish, just like all the others. The platter includes: falafel, hummus, homemade pita, tzatziki, roasted jalapeños & tomatoes.

Check out the full menu on our website!

Have drinks, snacks or dinner in our theater!

- FIRST RUN & INDEPENDENT FILMS
- SPECIAL SCREENINGS & EVENTS:
- OKTOBER FEST (FALL)
- MOUNTAINTOP FILM FESTIVAL (WINTER)
- CUBA FESTIVAL (SPRING)
- MAD 4 MUSIC FESTIVAL (SUMMER)



- DANCE FLOOR
- FULL BAR
- SODA FOUNTAIN
- BREAKFAST ALL DAY
- LUNCH & DINNER
- SUNDAY BRUNCH
- WIFI LOUNGE
- RENTAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WEDDINGS & FUNCTIONS




★ 802.496.8994 / 48 CARROLL ROAD / WAITSFIELD ★

★ OFF ROUTE 100 / OPEN WED-SUN / 10AM-10PM ★

★ WWW.BIGPICTURETHEATER.INFO ★



WELLNESS THERAPIES FOR HEALTHY LIVING

Specializing in pain relief therapies to eliminate muscle spasms restore flexibility and increase muscle strength and endurance

Kelly Iverson-Sellers
Matthew Sellers

Integrative Neurosomatic Therapy
Craniosacral Therapy

CALL TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT



www.sugarmountainmassage.com
Mad River Valley Health Center - Rt. 100, Waitsfield

YESTERMORROW

DESIGN/BUILD SCHOOL 

Hands-on courses and workshops in

Timberframing • Home Design • Permaculture • Biofuels • Carpentry • MicroHydro • Strawbale • Design/Build • Woodworking • Green Home Design • & many more!



Create a better world...

Discover the designer and builder within you.

Now in our 28th Year!

189 VT Route 100 • Warren, VT • 05674

www.yestermorrow.org • 802.496.5545

15% off tuition for Vermont Commons readers

Certified Organic



Handcrafted Breads from Locally-grown Grains

•

802-685-4687

At Co-ops in Central Vermont & the Upper Valley

Climate Change • Tapeworm Economy • No Child Left Behind • U.S. Constitution ignored • Warrantless Wiretappings • Habeas Corpus suspended • Abu Ghraib Prison Scandal • Torture of "Terror" Suspects • Bill of Rights violated • U.S. Empire's Full Spectrum Dominance • Iraq Wars: \$500 billion and counting • Climate Change • Tapeworm Economy • No Child Left Behind • U.S. Constitution ignored • Warrantless Wiretappings • Habeas Corpus suspended • Abu Ghraib Prison Scandal • Torture of "Terror" Suspects • Bill of Rights violated • U.S. Empire's Full Spectrum Dominance • Iraq Wars: \$500 billion and counting •

Free Vermont!

Town Meeting Campaign

We, the undersigned citizens of the sovereign state of Vermont, call upon our state legislature to convene a special session to debate the following one sentence resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED

that the state of Vermont peacefully and democratically free itself from the United States Empire and return to its status as an independent republic as it was between January 15, 1777 and March 4, 1791.

TOWN MEETING TEAMS NOW IN:

- Fayston
- Strafford
- Waitsfield

Join us.

www.freevermont.net

Vox Populi, continued from page 9

than I, I gained the respect that was slim at first. Now, there are many people who are trying to make those first steps, and they are looking to us for guidance. In the broader community, as issues of culture, environment, and energy increase in importance, there are more people who, at the very least, have an appreciation for the work we have been doing. The utility companies? They really don't even know we exist. Since we are not grid-tied, we didn't have to get permits from the Public Service Board. For a while after we built, the meter reader drove up our drive looking for a meter. After three or four attempts without success, he quit.

LM: We completed building our home in 2004 and since then have been growing our outreach to the local community and beyond. So our "enterprise" is relatively new, though Carl has been farming/managing the woodlot here for many years prior to our partnership. People are becoming more and more aware of us as Earthwise Farm and Forest. I don't think that most people really get what we are doing, but when we make connections with people that are interested in our approach and lifestyle there is tremendous enthusiasm. Both Carl and I are involved in the community on many levels: as consultants doing our "off-farm" work, on various boards, and volunteering for numerous events. I don't think many people realize we even have a farm within some of these circles.

What advice do you have for people who are considering preparing themselves for the collapse of industrial society and who want to adopt a simpler, more self-sufficient lifestyle?

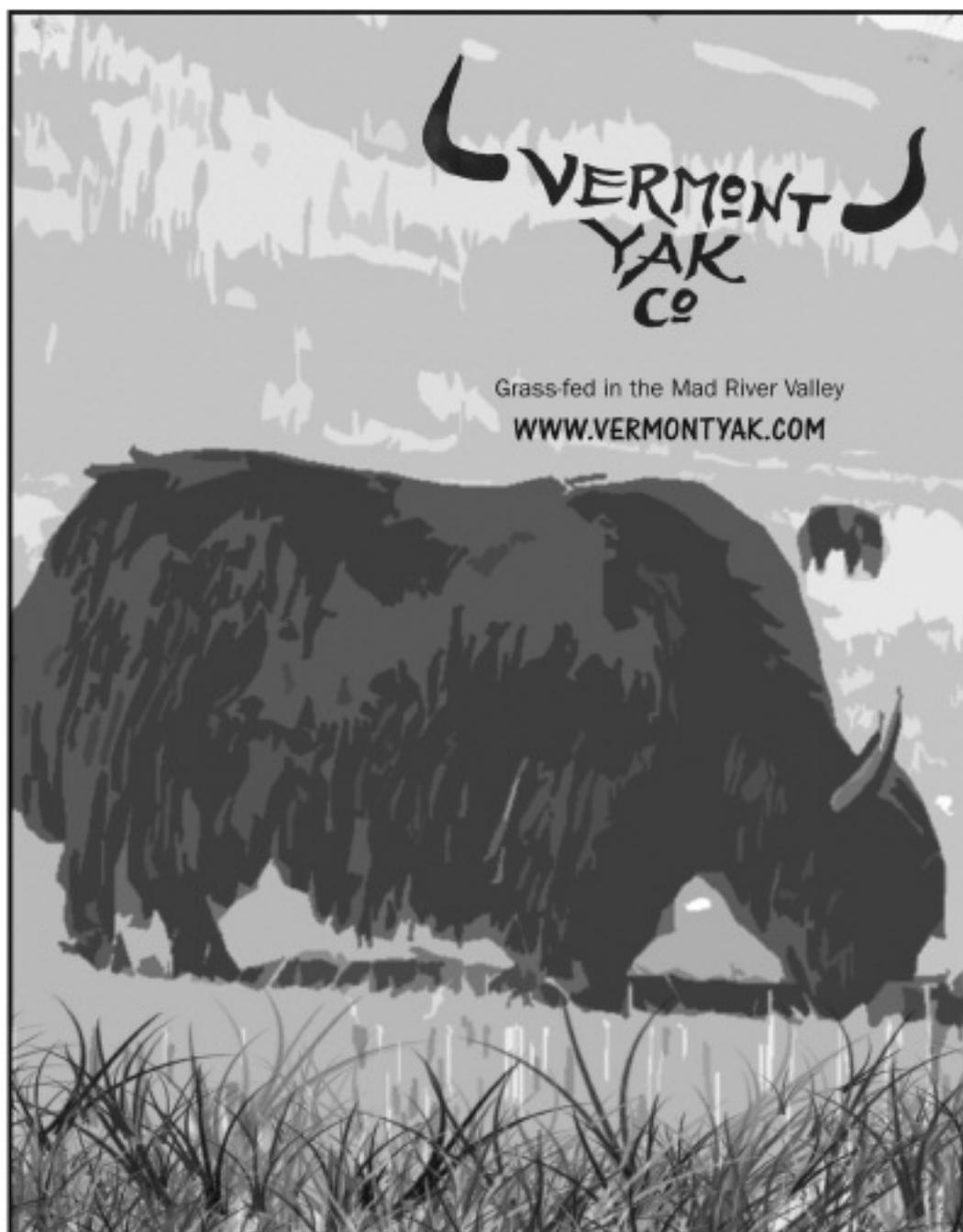
CR: I am not in the advice business. We all have so many extenuating circumstances that may make my choices seem ridiculous to a lot of other people. However, I will encourage people to quiet themselves, and to find a path that provides them with a sense of calm and security. I feel that it is important to focus on the relationships that we must make with the Earth and other life-forms in order to survive. There is something called the "Lemming Effect," where overpopulation and depleted resources lead to illness and neurosis, which then lead to wholesale chaos, where millions of these rodents run over cliffs and drown in the arctic sea. My only advice is believe it, and step aside; those of us left will try another approach.

LM: I would encourage people to stay open to their "voice within" – to listen to their calling and to find the people around them that they can learn from. If someone is drawn to a certain geographical area, I am certain that there will be individuals there who can be an example and a resource and possibly a mentor. It is a valuable skill to be able to network and learn from others and it is important to realize one's own worth, ideas, and individuality. Find your own truth and listen to your inner self for validation when you are walking your own path. The rest will fall into place. •

Moore, continued from page 7

In sum, it's not just peak oil we face, but peak food, peak water, peak climate, peak resources, peak energy, peak money, peak wisdom. Our urban and suburban, corporate-governed, cheap-oil-dependent, "Just-In-Time"-delivered, consumer-oriented, money-driven lifestyle can no longer sustain itself. Our abundance has peaked. Our prosperity has peaked. We have exceeded America's capacity to support our population at our current mode of living.

Therefore sustainability. •



Our family has been insuring Vermonters since 1865.

Now more than ever, experience counts.

All reputable independent insurance agencies represent and sell the insurance of reliable companies. The difference lies in the knowledge and service of the agency you select to protect you from loss.

This is the service you deserve and will find:

- ✓ Expert review of a client's needs to find the insurance company offering the best rates and protection.
- ✓ In-depth local and regional knowledge.
- ✓ Constant review of a client's coverage.
- ✓ Courteous, professional service.
- ✓ And personal attention!

JAMIESON

An independent insurance agency
www.jamiesonins.com

Waitsfield, VT - 802.496.2080
 Richmond, VT - 802.434.4142

Ember Photography
www.EmberPhoto.com

Brian Mohr
Emily Johnson

Marketing
 Special Projects
 Weddings/Events
 Fine Art

802.496.5434
info@emberphoto.com

Advertise with Vermont Commons

Vermont Commons is distributed through the mail six times a year, and is available at close to 200 different locations throughout the Green Mountain State.

For an ad rate sheet, please e-mail us at ads@vtcommons.org. All advertising partners receive 3 forms of ad service: print, online, and a listing in our monthly "Free Vermont" e-newsletter.

VERMONT LIBRE The Genteel Revolution *By Thomas Naylor*

Most of the great political revolutions of the world have been violent – the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the Hungarian Revolution, and Prague Spring.

However, three important political revolutions that took place in the second half of the twentieth century were, for the most part, non-violent. These included the civil rights movement in the American South, the end of apartheid in South Africa, and the demise of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Within a matter of a few weeks in 1989, the iron-fisted communist regimes in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, and Poland were replaced by more democratic governments, with little or no violence involved in the transition. Only Romania was a bloody exception to this rule. Two years later the Soviet Union peacefully imploded.

The headline of an Associated Press release dated June 2, 2007, seen around the world read “In Vermont, Nascent Secession Movement Gains Traction.” Across the Green Mountains there is a whiff of revolution in the air – a quiet and thoughtful revolution in which the revolutionists are well-educated, articulate writers, artists, academics, blue collar workers, doctors, farmers, lawyers, merchants, publishers, and other rebels committed to the belief that the United States of America has lost its moral authority and is unsustainable, ungovernable,

and, therefore, unfixable. These genteel rebels have called for the peaceful return of Vermont to its status as an independent republic as it once was between 1777 and 1791, and the dissolution of the American Empire.

Taking their cues from the 1961 Broadway musical “Stop the World, I Want to Get Off,” these modern-day secessionists want to free themselves from a technofascist state which condones a convoluted war on terrorism, a foreign policy based on full-spectrum dominance

The Vermont village green is a mirror image of the way America once was, but no longer knows how to be.

and imperial overstretch, the rendition of terrorist suspects, prisoner abuse and torture, the suppression of civil liberties, citizen surveillance, corporate greed, pandering to the rich and powerful, environmental degradation, pseudo-religious drivel, and a culture of deceit.

These radical intellectuals recognize the importance of the village green as a metaphor for Vermont – a place where people meet to chat, have coffee, a locally brewed beer, a glass of wine, or a bite to eat; read a newspaper; listen to music; smell the flowers; and pass the

time away. They know that the village green is all about the politics of human scale – small towns, small businesses, small schools, and small churches. The Vermont village green is neat, clean, democratic, nonviolent, noncommercial, egalitarian, and humane. It is a mirror image of the way America once was, but no longer knows how to be.

Among the principles to which supporters of Vermont’s genteel revolution subscribe are political independence, human scale, sustainability, economic solidarity, power sharing, equal opportunity, tension reduction, and community. The very essence of the village green is a strong sense of the community among its citizens and their neighbors. It is this sense of community that makes Vermont so radical.

Vermont provides a communitarian alternative to the dehumanized, mass-production, mass-consumption, overregulated, narcissistic lifestyle that pervades most of America. In Vermont, the politics of human scale always trumps the politics of money, power, size, speed, greed, and fear of terrorism. Living in Vermont is a lot like living in a small European country.

America, too, needs a genteel revolution. Vermont separatists stand ready to help save Vermont, America, and the rest of the world from the American Empire by leading our nation into peaceful disunion. •



Homestead Security: How might we re-tool our Vermont homes and communities for living in a carbon-constrained future? CREDIT: TARA HAMILTON



SERENA FOX DESIGN COMPANY

At SFDC we strive for a return to the "art" of design and communication with an understanding of our dedication to and responsibility for mankind, energy, thoughts and the earth.

It is our mission to not only exceed the needs and desires of our clients, but to be a positive influence upon our society and our future.

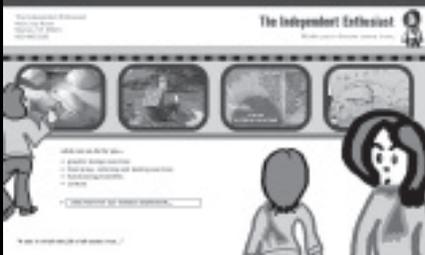
- Web Design
- Books and CDs
- Logos and ID
- Brochures, Reports and Catalogs
- Packaging
- Mags and Pubs
- Posters and Invites

802.496.2326
www.serenafoxdesign.com

The Independent Enthusiast

662 Loop Road
Warren, VT 05674
802.496.2326

Helping you do whatever it is that you need to do.
Because you should make your dream come true.



www.independententhusiast.com



Editorial, continued from page 2



Wyoming" (see www.lakotafreedom.com). A map suggesting the future five-state area of the legally constituted Lakota Sioux Nation of Indians is shown above.

Let us, like the Sioux, remember who we are and remember we too are a hopeful people nestled in a very specific place: the hills and valleys of Vermont. Greg Strong writes a feature piece about hope: read about the more-than 60 individuals, organizations, businesses, initiatives, and projects already launched with the goal of making Vermont a sustainable-energy polis. In another feature, Frank Bryan reminds us that we have not yet lost our democracy here in Vermont, though we have much to do to fully reclaim it, taking back power ceded over decades to Washington, D.C. "We have to learn to be happy living small," Bryan reminds us, as monstrosity is the enemy of democracy.

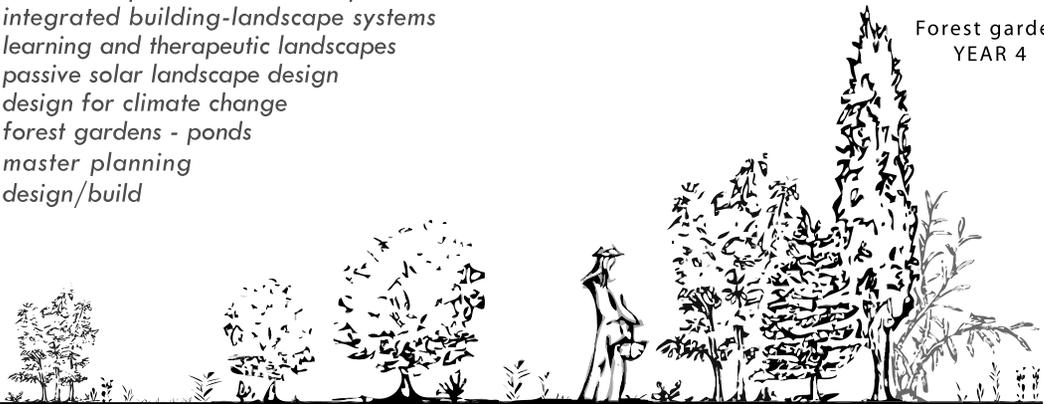
Vermont Commons is a journal of ideas, and we believe ideas are what in the end make us who we are. We are neuro-linguistically motivated beings, creatures propelled by words, or rather the constructs we make of words. According to the writer Rebecca Solnit, "to write, to make art or film, to work as a journalist or an educator can be a radical act, one that blurs the lines between action and contemplation by employing ideas as tools to make the world as well as understand it."

We are engaged in "the battle of the story." The story that will guide who we will be.

That is our business at *Vermont Commons*, "mere" words and ideas. At this particular moment in time it, is a business crucial to our survival as a sustainable and diverse community. •

A regenerative response.

Land systems for local culture
*orchards - permaculture food production
 integrated building-landscape systems
 learning and therapeutic landscapes
 passive solar landscape design
 design for climate change
 forest gardens - ponds
 master planning
 design/build*



Forest garden
YEAR 4

Landscape Architecture + Site Development
residential - community - institutional 802.496.3128
www.wholesystemsdesign.com



WHOLE SYSTEMS DESIGN, LLC
Whole Human Habitats

Dispersions, continued from page 24

colleges, and cultural centers, as well as Ken Burns' Civil War series and the Library of America. That would seem to give official blessing to the secessionist cause, wouldn't it?

Except that the conference really hadn't anything to do with the *current* secessionist cause, except the one in Taiwan and a handful in Europe. It had papers on secession in Ireland, Africa, Chechnya, Uruguay, Mexico, Iraq, but not a single one on secession in America – *except* that one secession tried by the Confederacy 145 years ago, and there were no fewer than 12 papers on that.

Some people – well, our own Thomas Naylor at least – worried that the fact of the NEH's endorsement meant that the administration (or the ghost of Lynne Cheney, NEH head in 1986-1993) was

attempting to take over and neuter the movement. But the conference paid no attention whatsoever to the movement, as far as we know, and I think it was more likely a little academic exercise, people pushing their way up the tenure ladder.

Still, it was good to have secession in the air.

Thomas Moore, who has coordinated the Southern National Congress's coordinating committee for the past several years and will lead it to its first convention next December, has launched another organization, the Southern Institute for Sustainable Living. You can get some idea of its purpose and goals from the excerpt of the first part of its mission statement, printed in the Middlebury Institute column in this issue. And visit SISLINC.org for the full statement. •

Subscribe to *Vermont Commons*

Get *Vermont Commons* delivered right to your door and stay on top of the issues that will shape Vermont's future.

- One Year (6 issues) \$25 (\$30 overseas)

Name

Address

E-mail

Phone

Send check to: Vermont Commons • P.O. Box 1121
 Waitsfield, VT 05673 or subscribe online at
www.vtcommons.org.

DISPERSIONS Dispatches from the Front *By Kirkpatrick Sale*

According to the latest figures, for 2005, from the Tax Foundation in Washington, more than half the states of the U.S. – 32 of 50 – get more money from the federal government than they pay in. New Mexico gets the most – \$2.03 for every dollar it puts in – and New Jersey gets the least – a meager 61 cents for every dollar.

Below is the chart with the news – dismal, in one sense, because it makes the case for secession harder in those majority states that feed high on the federal teat. (Although it must be noted that eight of the states are in the South, where the case for secession is easier made since there is an active secessionist movement there. But easier, by the same token, for the states that would benefit financially if they were independent, and as you can see they are the richer states to begin with, hence with a greater chance at economic success.

A regional alliance of an independent New York-Jersey would have a very strong reason for going it alone; throw in Connecticut, and you'd have one of the strongest economies in the world, with an average household income of \$52,323 (using 2002-04 figures). That compares nicely with \$54,000 for Switzerland (and California!), the U.S. at \$46,000, Canada at \$43,000, and the U.K. at \$39,000. Talk about economic viability.

A regional alliance of New England is also interesting in this regard, since only Vermont and Maine get back more than they give in, and the other states ought to be glad to have their independence. As an independent nation New England would have a household income average of \$49,493 – not bad, and richer than the U.S. And you can see from the chart it would be even richer if it wasn't supporting the empire.

Vermont has spent a lot of time paying out more to the federal government than it got back. Although it has been on the plus side of the exchange since 1995, the figures don't include money Vermonters have to spend to satisfy federal laws and regulations that in many cases impose real burdens.

Vermont is an interesting case. It got 8 cents more back on the dollar than it put in, and the citizens might not be so eager to give that arrangement up. But looked at in a larger perspective, the state has spent quite a bit of time paying out *more* than it got back. Indeed, from 1985 to 1995 it was getting back only 88-94 cents for every dollar sent to D.C. It's been on the plus side since then, varying from 3-4 cents to 25-26 cents in the late 1990s, but just 8 cents in 2005 – with the feds putting in \$4.6 billion and taking back \$4.1.

And that figure does not include the amount of money citizens and local institutions have to spend in order to satisfy various federal laws and regulations that in many cases impose real burdens. For example, the federal No Child Left Behind Act places what the Heritage Foundation calls "massive administrative and bureaucratic costs" on the states, as on Connecticut which figures it spends \$17 million a year to comply, and Virginia which estimates \$20 million. Using the same ratio, Vermont would be spending around \$3.4 million a year. And don't forget Vermont's share of the *federal* cost of the program, set to be \$24.4 billion next year.

Or take the example of U.S. Department of Agriculture rules on dairy farming. Over the last 20 years or so the feds have insisted on regulations that favored larger and larger farms and put a heavy regulatory and compliance cost burden on smaller outfits. Federal milk-price schemes have also worked to the advantage of larger farms, mostly in California and the upper Midwest – one reason so many Vermont family dairy farms have failed in recent years.

Right there should be enough incentive for secession.

The University of South Carolina put on a high-level academic conference on secession in early December, free and open to the public. Though it was odd, it didn't really matter that the 30 professors invited to give papers were people almost entirely unknown to secession experts that have been involved

Federal Spending in Each State Per Dollar of Federal Taxes FY 2005

State	Federal Spending per Dollar of Federal Taxes	Rank
New Mexico	\$2.03	1
Mississippi	\$2.02	2
Alaska	\$1.84	3
Louisiana	\$1.78	4
West Virginia	\$1.76	5
North Dakota	\$1.68	6
Alabama	\$1.66	7
South Dakota	\$1.53	8
Kentucky	\$1.51	9
Virginia	\$1.51	10
Montana	\$1.47	11
Hawaii	\$1.44	12
Maine	\$1.41	13
Arkansas	\$1.41	14
Oklahoma	\$1.36	15
South Carolina	\$1.35	16
Missouri	\$1.32	17
Maryland	\$1.30	18
Tennessee	\$1.27	19
Idaho	\$1.21	20
Arizona	\$1.19	21
Kansas	\$1.12	22
Wyoming	\$1.11	23
Iowa	\$1.10	24
Nebraska	\$1.10	25
Vermont	\$1.08	26
North Carolina	\$1.08	27
Pennsylvania	\$1.07	28
Utah	\$1.07	29
Indiana	\$1.05	30
Ohio	\$1.05	31
Georgia	\$1.01	32
Rhode Island	\$1.00	33
Florida	\$0.97	34
Texas	\$0.94	35
Oregon	\$0.93	36
Michigan	\$0.92	37
Washington	\$0.88	38
Wisconsin	\$0.86	39
Massachusetts	\$0.82	40
Colorado	\$0.81	41
New York	\$0.79	42
California	\$0.78	43
Delaware	\$0.77	44
Illinois	\$0.75	45
Minnesota	\$0.72	46
New Hampshire	\$0.71	47
Connecticut	\$0.69	48
Nevada	\$0.65	49
New Jersey	\$0.61	50
District of Columbia	\$5.55	na

Source: Tax Foundation, Census Bureau

in the recent secession movement – Donald Livingston and Thomas Naylor, for example – or that not one of them was connected to one of the 30 or so North American secessionist organizations now operating. What was important was that the university and its ARENA division (Association for Research on Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Americas) saw fit to recognize secession as "an international phenomenon" worthy of three days of discussion.

And that it was able to get grants for this from two of the university's prestigious institutes, its Office of Research and Health Science, and its department of history, plus "major funding" from the Watson Brown Foundation, a Georgia-based fund that supports Southeastern colleges, and from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which regularly funds museums,

continued on page 23