



S thrive on giving you the illusion that they are where the action is. Others take you 'behind the scenes'. Still others probe in-depth with long investigative articles. But a good deal of this is 'smoke and mirrors' to give the reader or viewer the sense that they are being given a special form of insight. Much as it would be nice to kid ourselves, NI does not stand above the fray. We have to compete for your attention and your money so we have developed our own tricks. NI thrives on the illusion that you are getting a comprehensive view of a particular subject shoved through your mailbox every month. But how total is our coverage of a particular subject? Is it a 32-page sleight-of-hand? Take this issue on the Greens for example. I have found it a slippery subject to get a hold of. Every Green I talked to had a substantially different perception, not only of where the movement should be going but also of how it should be getting there. Most Greens do not like politics - at least the way it is presently conducted - and who can blame them? They are a kind of 'anti-party' party. So how to go about doing an issue on a

done what every other journalist ends up doing - although few will admit it. I have chosen those facts and emphasized those themes that support my own views. Take the 'Simply' section on page 22 of this issue. I have not included several parts of the Green agenda which many Greens might well have gone for. I have left out mysticism and a return to the ancient folklores: very popular in some Green circles, but not with me. Nor have I paid much attention in this issue to a view quite prominent among Greens that Nature is pure and that the main problem is that human beings see themselves as the centre of the universe. I frankly think that politics (and Green politics is no different) is about how human beings order their affairs and not about the moral superiority of one species over another. Are wolves superior to human beings? I don't know and I don't care. So to a large extent, and I hope I have not done too much damage to the facts, I have emphasized what I approve of in Green politics; the decentralization of power, the challenge to an economic growth without purpose. I have not really dealt with appropriate technologies or the experiences of small alternative eco-communities - not because I don't think that they are important but because there was just no room. So much for being comprehensive. Next month another editor will be just as

facts will they select and what questions won't they ask? My fellow editors on the Oxford side of the Atlantic (I am a guest-worker from the other side) are, I feel, pretty skeptical about Green politics. It is strange that this should be so. Thumbing through the old back issues of NI a lot of the subjects that we have touched and causes we have championed are now being taken up by the Greens - from holistic health care to small-scale development projects in the Third World. Maybe we have been Green all along without even recognizing the fact. A UK readership survey confirmed this when 21 per cent claimed Green as their political affiliation. That certainly influenced the decision to do this issue. One of my fellow editors claims that the Greens are the product of everyone else's failures. Maybe that is what keeps NI going as well. But I hope we challenge some conventional wisdoms and offer a useful tool for understanding the world. We had better or you probably won't renew. So far our record hasn't been too bad or we wouldn't have survived for 14 years. The task the Greens have set for themselves is a lot bigger.

Richard Swift
Richard Swift
 for the New Internationalist Co-operative

CONTENTS

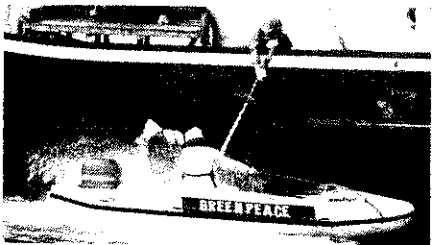
NI No. 171

MAY 1987

GREEN POLITICS



What if the Greens achieved power? 4
 Richard Swift investigates the obstacles to a Green politics.



The Greenpeace media machine 8
 Eric Draper on media-genic environmentalists.

Everything in its place 10
 The bioregional approach to decision-making.



Polluting the poor 12
 Khor Kok Peng on the necessity of being Green in the Third World.

Greening the Left 14
 Diana Johnston argues for an eco-socialism.

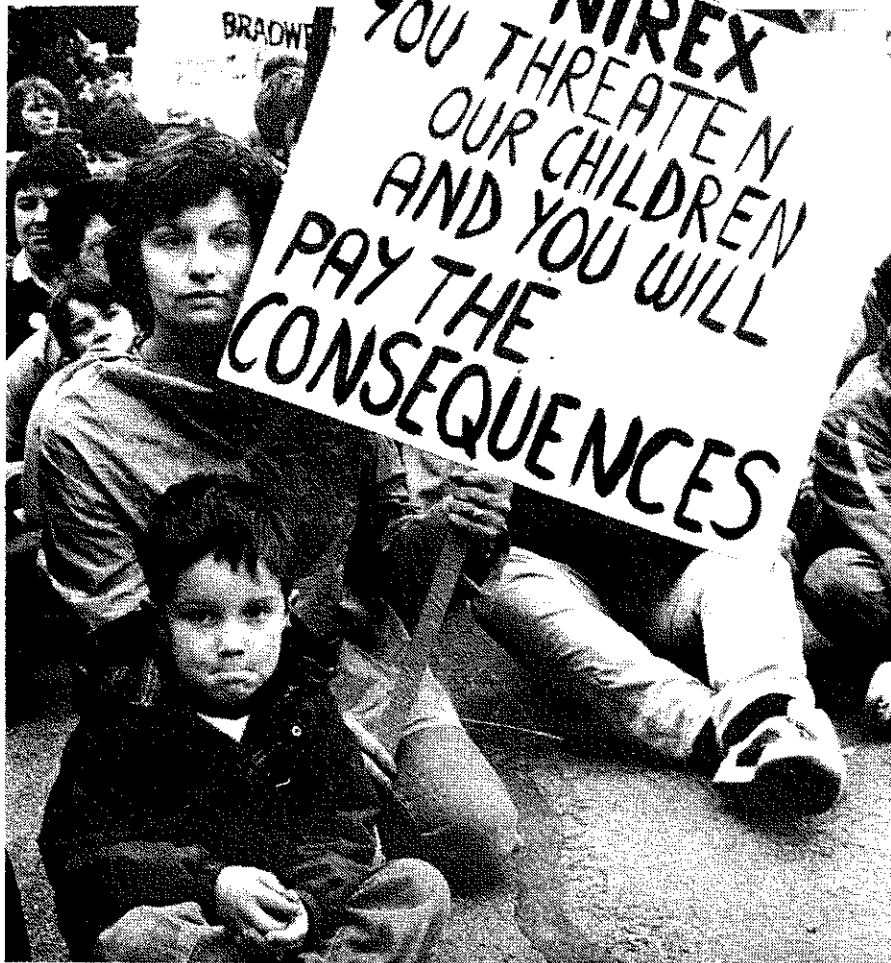
GREEN POLITICS - THE FACTS 16

#26

Eco-feminism	18
Caroline Merchant on women's action to save the environment.	
The ideological battle	19
Debbie Bookchin explores the dilemmas facing West Germany's Greens.	
Action directory	21
SIMPLY ... The Green Agenda	22
Grow your own dollars	24
Dick Racey rethinks money and its purpose.	

LETTERS	2
LETTER FROM MAWERE	3
UPDATE	26
ENDPIECE: by John Medcalf	29
REVIEWS: including the Victorian classic Aurora Leigh	30
COUNTRY PROFILE: Lesotho	32

Cover illustration: Rick Coffin



Protest against a radioactive waste site - women are becoming active in defending their homes against industrial contamination.

Eco-feminism

Both women and Nature are degraded by the male rush for growth and profit. But women are starting to fight back. Caroline Merchant believes that women's defence of a healthy home environment can be an important source of strength for Green politics - and help it challenge runaway capitalism.

WOMEN of the Green Belt movement in Kenya band together to plant millions of trees in arid degraded environments. In India's Chipco (treehugging) movement, women work together to preserve precious fuel resources for their local communities. Women in Sweden prepare jam from berries sprayed with herbicides and offer a taste to members of parliament (they refuse the offer). In Canada, women take to the streets with a petition opposing uranium mining in sites near their home towns. In the United States, women organize the clean-up of rivers and hazardous waste sites. All these actions are examples of a world-wide movement, increasingly known as 'eco-feminism', dedicated to restoring the natural environment.

The term *Eco-feminism*, was coined by

French writer Francoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 to represent women's potential for bringing about an ecological revolution. Eco-feminism is a response to the perception that both women and Nature have been devalued in Western culture and that both can be elevated and liberated through direct political action. The earth is being dominated by male-controlled industrialization, technology and science. Women are being dominated by the complex of social patterns called capitalist patriarchy - in which men labour in the marketplace and women labour in the home.

The scientific revolution of the seventeenth century changed the metaphor that represented Nature. From being a goddess or a nurturing mother it was transformed into a machine to be controlled and repaired by men. The rise of capitalism was

legitimated by the idea that the earth and Nature were to be used for human progress and could be dominated through human technology - an idea that was central to the rise of capitalism. Simultaneously, social and economic changes eroded the subsistence-based farm and city workshop in which men and women were economic partners. An increasingly industrialized society was dominated by men with domestic life the preserve of women. Women's labour in the home was (and still is) unpaid and perceived to be subordinate to men's labour in the market place. Both women and Nature were subordinated to male-defined purposes. The vision of Nature held in esteem as mother and goddess remains as a source of inspiration and empowerment for many feminists.

A second connection between women and Nature centres on their role in biological reproduction. Women are perceived to be closer to Nature because of their capacity for bearing children. Menstruation, pregnancy, nursing and nurturing of infants and young children are viewed as tying them to the home, decreasing their mobility and inhibiting their ability to remain in the workforce. Feminists argue that reducing women to their 'biological destiny' as mothers 'as in the idea of the 'earth-mother' degrades them because Nature is so devalued in Western culture.

But the connection between women and biological reproduction is very much the source of women's ecological activism in defense of a healthy home and family life. Women protest radioactivity from nuclear wastes, power-plants and bombs as a potential cause of birth defects and cancers. They argue that hazardous waste sites near schools and homes permeate soil and drinking water, producing statistically higher cases of leukemia, miscarriages and birth defects among local families. They object to pesticides and herbicides being sprayed on crops and forests as potentially affecting child-bearing women living near them. Women frequently spearhead local actions against spraying and power plant siting and organize citizens to demand toxic clean-ups. When coupled with an environmental ethic that values rather than degrades Nature, such actions can raise women's consciousness of their own oppression and its connection to the polluting effects of male-dominated industrialization. For example, many lower-middle class women became politicized through protests over toxic chemical wastes at Love Canal.

In September 1986, biologist Wangura Maathai received an award from the Better World Society for starting Kenya's Green Belt Movement that has planted over two million trees since 1977. There is a firewood shortage in Kenya and women must spend much of each day gathering wood and carrying water. The campaign showed a good grasp of sound ecological principles. It encouraged the planting of trees to protect croplands and the use of animal manures instead of expensive imported fertilizers.

In the Chipco (tree hugging) movement in Himalayan villages in India, women have banded together to protect precious fuel and fodder resources from lumberjacks – and even from their own husbands and sons who seek to sell lumber.

Women at Greenham Common in England helped set off a wave of protest over the installation of cruise missiles by the United States. Similar protests were held in Holland, Sicily, West Germany, and Switzerland. Women protesters argue that there is a parallel between men's colonization of space and women's bodies and the American colonization of European soil with nuclear weapons. Their alternative to men's rape of the earth through their missile-civilization is an ecological way of life that threatens neither the earth nor one another.

Greens have a better record than most when it comes to dealing with the concerns of feminists. Sweden's Environmental party is modelled on the West German Green party. The party is a grassroots organization and has captured many seats at the county level, but has not as yet achieved representation in parliament. Like the German Greens, the Environmental party gives more power to women members than other Swedish parties and shows a sensitivity to women's issues. But women are represented more strongly on committees dealing with traditional women's concerns – peace, housing, schools, child-care, and agriculture – while men are attracted in greater numbers to committees dealing with energy, economics, science, and international issues.

But Eco-feminism has its critics. They point to the problem that men are glorified in their role as public creators of culture whereas women are degraded in their private 'natural' role as mothers in the home. Male-identified culture degrades both Nature and women in their purely 'natural' role. If 'female is to male as Nature is to culture' as anthropologist Sherry Ortner argues, then women's hopes for liberation are set back by association with Nature. Any analysis that makes women's essence and qualities special, ties them to a biological and 'natural' destiny that thwarts the possibility of liberation. Similarly socialist feminists criticize a politics grounded solely in women's culture, experience and values as reactionary. Such critics argue instead for an economic and social revolution that will liberate both women and men in ways that will also sustain life on the planet. Some see Green politics as the social movement that best fulfills this vision while others opt for a more orthodox class-based political revolution. But more and more ecologically-concerned women are turning to eco-feminism as the most inspiring way to empower themselves while restoring ecological balance to the earth. □

Caroline Merchant is the author of *The Death of Nature*.

The ideological battle

Germany has proved the most fertile ground for the seeds of Green politics. But it has proven to be a tense and quarrelsome flowering. Debbie Bookchin argues that the lively contradictions of the German Greens are a source of their strength.

A BITTER December wind whistles through the courtyard of the one-time palace of the Duke of Hesse-Nassau, now the Hessian Parliament in Wiesbaden. Inside, parliament deputies and their guests, warmed by parquet floors and chandeliers, celebrate a first in West German history; the inauguration of Joseph 'Joschka' Fischer as Environmental Minister for the state of Hesse.

Joschka is no ordinary Minister. Unlike his fellow Cabinet members, puffy men dressed in suits and ties, Joschka sports sneakers and jeans topped with a sweatshirt and blazer. No-one is surprised any more. He is a Green. And Greens, whether tramping through the woods to occupy the site of a proposed nuclear-fuel reprocessing plant or sporting colorful home-knit sweaters while addressing their fellow legislators, have become a fixture in the German political landscape.



German Greens return trees to proposed site of nuclear re-processing plant.

In addition to their distinctive garb, they have brought life to the staid chamber with unsettling speeches on foreign affairs, air pollution, nuclear disarmament, women's issues and sexuality – often to the chagrin of members of the establishment parties who heckled and urged them to unleash their philosophy somewhere else.

But disappearance was not on the agenda. The Greens steadily increased their membership and representation in town, city, province and state governments throughout the Federal Republic. In the January 1987 federal elections, almost one million more people voted for the Greens than had done so four years earlier. Greens increased their share of votes by more than 25 per cent with 3.12 million Germans voting for them. Of the 44 Green deputies that took their seats in the Bundestag more than half were women – a first for any West German political party. The Greens hold a unique position in the spectrum of social change. Formed in 1979 from anti-nuclear, communitarian, feminist, Third World and popular protest movements, they have given political voice to extra-parliamentary citizen's initiatives without undermining them. They have integrated a rich variety of radical concerns into a unified political party in which diverse interests are wedded in an ecological outlook.

The ecological concept of diversity, a key to balance and stabilization in the natural world, finds its social counterpart in the Green philosophy of decentralization and grassroots democracy. The idea is that a democracy must provide people with opportunities to air a variety of views in shaping their own decisions rather than always deferring to professional politicians and experts.

The Green example of party democracy is reshaping German politics. In a society accustomed to highly-centralized Government and bureaucratic parties, the Greens conveys an unusual democratic ambience. Disputes are aired in public, the leadership is responsible to the membership and principles outweigh tactics. They have not only added new life to the parliament, they've become a grassroots parliament in their own right: issue debates can go on for days and everyone who wants to participate.

But it has not been an easy road. The Greens have weathered the practical and ideological pitfalls of trying to retain a radical opposition stance in the face of an establishment that attempts to alternatively absorb and destroy them. Tenets such as the rotation of public office every two years to discourage 'professional' politicians have been discarded as unfeasible within the present system. Ideological debates over issues like experimentation on animals and even child sexuality have strained emotions.