

# The Citizen

## Bulletin for the Confederation of Municipal Greens

51 Lee Ave., Toronto, Ontario, M4E 2P1

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Volume 1

Issue 1 & 2

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### Editor's Introduction

For those of you who have no idea what this is in your hands, skip on down to the next paragraph. For those of you who have been anxiously awaiting this, I apologize. A vast range of interferences since June have prevented having the bulletin in order sooner - including, an unprecedented two summer vacations(!), a lengthy period of illness, a postal strike, an interminable series of computer problems and long waits for a couple of contributions. (Well, the masthead does say an "occasional publication.")

Within this double issue of The Citizen you'll find a report on a meeting that took place in Kingston, Ontario, in early June, 1991. At that time a gathering of people, individually affiliated with the Left Green Network, chose to establish their own organization with a distinctly Canadian/Quebécois/None-of-the-Above identity. Thus was born the Confederation of Municipal Greens. Part of its establishment was the decision to form a bulletin for intra-CMG discussion. You're looking at the first page of issue one (and two) for this undertaking.

Subscription to The Citizen constitutes membership in the CMG. And, membership in the CMG constitutes solidarity with the LGN. The formation of the CMG, however, should not be understood as some knee-jerk nationalist reaction. It grew out of a principled evaluation of a distinct history's/histories' consequence in posing a different context, with different problems. Furthermore, as the selected name implies, it involved a radical commitment to what is often treated as little more than a tactical measure by some in the LGN: municipalism, a recovery of autonomy, democracy and ecology out of the decentralization and confederation of power among Green municipalities - rural as well as urban!



If we have learned anything about prefigurative praxis, about the necessity of our means expressing our ends in process as well as in ideal, then the municipalist vision of a confederation of empowered citizens and communities must be an integral part of how we struggle - not just what we struggle for. It is appropriate therefore that the CMG is organized around its tiered system of association: beginning with the confederation of Green individuals, then shifting to a confederation of Green municipal groups, and then finally Green municipalities themselves, as conditions evolve.

The CMG is broadly committed to the principles of the LGN, though there are certain specifics some of us would take issue with. But we do adhere to a broad left-green vision of social and ecological transformation and regeneration. Our choice of a distinct identity does not diminish such a broad view, it deepens it. Our choice grounds our left green perspective in a prefigurative praxis that is a vision, a strategy and a program. And it does so in a way that we believe speaks directly to the needs of people in Canada/Quebec now facing political and constitutional disintegration. A confederation of Green municipalities may yet attract the constitutional consideration it requires. If it were to do so, however, only a vain optimist would imagine the idea being introduced from the councils of state. If it is to have its day, such a confederal constitution must be articulated from within the communities and neighbourhoods, in which it would find institutional embodiment: the grassroots of a new political culture - a new community of citizens.

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Left Green Network - 3rd Continental Conference  
Chicago, July 3-7 - United Church of Rogers Park

The Canadian Left Green Network was strongly represented at the third conference of the LGN by Kate Sandilands, Nick Ternette and Ross Dobson, each of whom spoke as evening session panelists.

Kate Sandilands spoke on the opening Wednesday evening panel on Ecology and Feminism, with author Rosemary Radcliffe Reuther and Laura Schere. All offered critiques of eco-feminism. Reuther reached back into religious and cultural history to trace the self-serving male myth that women are closer to nature than men, and asked why what women do is considered more "natural" than what men do. Sandilands criticized the LGN policy paragraphs on feminism (and is helping to re-write them) in the same de-constructionist mode, that seeks to "get beyond" eco-feminism to - perhaps "feminism"? - and Laura Schere, principally critiquing Janet Biehl's latest book (in which Biehl suggests we should all transcend divisions like "feminism" in favour of a more universal and rational general humanism), agreeing with the sentiment (SIC) but preferring to hang onto her feminine/feminist "particularity" while the world is imperfect. I came away from this discussion feeling that the views represented are an immensely important leading edge of critical social thinking which should be much more central to Left Green policies and praxis than they are - as evidenced by the "opening act" placement of the feminist panel on the first evening of the conference.

Nick Ternette spoke on the Thursday evening panel with two other "relics" of the '60's new left, Sulaiman Mahdi of SNOC and The Black Panthers, and Carl Davidson of SNOC and The Weathermen. Mahdi noted the cultural differences which informed the black liberation movement and differentiated it from the white, middle-class student/anti-war movement of the '60's - especially on the question of non-violence. He asked for understanding that when violence is systemic, the reply to that violence in self defence should not be criticized by Greens, even from their general advocacy of non-violence. Davidson talked about how the new left of the '60's consciously distanced itself from the old left on questions of doctrine and tactics, and seemed to suggest that the Green left would have to "difference" itself as strenuously to try to move away from the knee-jerk rhetoric, philosophy and confrontationalism that still mires many of us in the politics of the past. Ternette mesmerized (or perhaps stunned) the group with his old new-left speechifying style as he outlined the direct relationship - broken in North America - between the '60's new-left and the European Greens. Davidson, after Nick's performance, sighed "that brings back memories!"

Friday evening's panel was a report on the Canadian and U.S. LGN activities over the last year by Ross Dobson and Charlie Betz. Dobson reported on a series of informal and formal basic decisions taken by the LGN in Canada, the first of which was the (almost) unconscious decision to establish a CANADIAN Left Green Network, on the basis of social and cultural differences, although created because of an artificial border. Changes in the regional structure of the Continental LGN will have to flow from that. That decision made, the way was open to transform our casual participation in the ongoing Left-Green Interface debate at the Society for Socialist Studies annual conferences (part of the Canadian University's Learned Societies' Annual Conferences) into a more formal venue for an annual Canadian Left Green Meeting, which was done at the



Learned in Kingston in May, when we also constituted the Canadian Left Green Network as The Confederation of Municipal Greens, linking Montreal Quebec City, Toronto, Guelph, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Victoria. Dobson's report was supplemented by a letter to the Conference from Eric Pineau of Quebec City, essentially reporting in detail on the Kingston meeting as did Dimitri Rousopoulos in our last publication ((The Citizen, 0/0). Betz reported on American Left Green Activity over the past year.

Afternoon workshops during the conference heard a report on the German Greens demise, reaction to (Mexican/American) Free Trade remarkably similar to Canadian Labour's objections to Canadian/American Free Trade, and the old debate about movement VS electoral activity, highlighted by a plea for State-level activity in Vermont and Oregon, where State Legislatures are much more like the City Councils of large centres like Chicago and New York, possibly winnable, and in which State Legislative power could be used to re-empower municipal levels of government. Most of the audience argued against State and National electoral involvement.

Regional, People of Colour and Feminist Caucuses did not occur or minimally occurred (no people of colour were there, except for one panelist) and such reports as there were were delivered to a Saturday plenary after Nick and I had left, traveling back to Winnipeg. Reports on them will have to await the general report in the U.S. LGN Network News.

Ross Dobson, Winnipeg.



WINNIPEG:

The founding meeting for ECOLOGY WIN NIPEG ECOLOGIQUE (Working Title) has been called for Aug. 20/91. The following call went out to a dozen municipal green activists:

MEETING CALL

It is time to formalize a green municipal political action group.

Believe it or not, we do have a history as greens in Winnipeg, and the formalization of political action groups has been proceeding across the country.

It is not intended that we be overly restrictive about how we proceed in our green organizing, but various decisions have been made, collectively, and it seems prudent to proceed according to those decisions as we develop further.

The attached documentation will fill you in on what that history and more recent formalization has been. (NB: THE CITIZEN 0/0)

Where we are at the moment is forming ECOLOGY WINNIPEG ECOLOGIQUE, in concert with ECOLOGY MONTREAL, QUEBEC CITY, TORONTO, GUELPH, VANCOUVER, VICTORIA. which are coming together as THE CONFEDERATION OF MUNICIPAL GREENS.

This formalization is neither competition for nor a replacement of The Green Party of Canada (The Canadian Greens) - or of B.C. or Ontario or Quebec, but rather is a vehicle for those focusing on municipal political action, where most of us feel green political action is appropriately focused.

We adopt no hard position for or against provincial or federal activism and electoral participation, except to favour day-to-day community activism over electoral politics, and to prioritize issues and involvement as Neighbourhood, Municipal, Bio-regional, Provincial, Regional and National, in that order.

Our formation meeting will be held at 1464 Wellington Crescente at 8:00 PM on Tuesday, August 20/91

AGENDA:

- The formation of ECOLOGY WINNIPEG ECOLOGIQUE
- Adoption of/additions and amendments to Agenda.
- Designation of a Newsletter (National and Local) method/coordinator.
- Designation of a Treasurer and signing officers.
- Setting a meeting schedule.
- Discussion, alteration, adoption of principles and priorities.
- Discussion of how to go public and relations with WIN, CHOICES. etc.
- Approval/amendment of general call (proposed LINKS release, see next p.)



(6)

PROPOSED FIRST EXPOSURE IN LINKS (LOCAL GREEN MAGAZINE) THIS FALL

**ECOLOGY WINNIPEG ECOLOGIQUE:**

1. We are a political action group of The Winnipeg Greens and members of the Canadian Left Green Network: The Confederation of Municipal Greens.
2. We act locally to bring about environmental responsibility, ecological morality and social equity in a vital municipal political culture, through encouraging, exercising and expanding the rights and responsibilities of empowered citizenship.
3. We engage routinely in social, economic, cultural, political and electoral activism in support of community self determination.
4. We function according to the ideals, principles and practices of the green movement as established by Winnipeg general meetings in 1988 & 1989 and those established by the inaugural national meeting of the Confederation of Municipal Greens in Kingston, Ont., in May, 1991.
5. We co-operate locally with those whose goals are compatible and associate confederally with similar groups in a continental left-green network.

IF YOU OR YOUR ORGANIZATION CARE TO JOIN WITH US PLEASE WRITE TO E.W.E. AT 511 NEWMAN ST. WINNIPEG R3G 2V6 AND SEND \$20.00: \$5.00 TO SUPPORT LOCAL COMMUNICATION, AND \$15.00 FOR MEMBERSHIP AND THE NEWSLETTER "The Citizen".



Guelph's "Municipal Democracy Movement" (MDM)  
Bill Hulet

Beginings

Guelph has had a strong activist community for most of its history. (For example, the Canadian Communist Party was formed here.) A chapter of Ralph Nader's Public Interest Research Groups has worked at the University of Guelph for 15 years. This has been instrumental in forming a community of trained organizers and politically informed individuals. It has also spawned a handful of "spin-off" groups, such as the Guelph International Resource Center, the Latin American Solidarity Group, the Speed River Project, etc.. In addition, there are several other organizations such as the Centre for Employable Workers, the Women's Resource Centre, various housing Co-Ops, the food Co-Op, the United Church Social Justice Committees, and so-on. What was lacking in the community was some sort of network that would pull these different groups together and politicize the issues that they are working towards.

The initial impetus came from a civic election in 1988 which returned an entire slate of incumbent politicians to council. With one exception these were Conservatives or Liberals with a strong bias towards mindless growth. (In fact, the most popular councillor was an alcoholic buffoon who often was drunk during meetings.)

With this in mind, I called a meeting of a small number of leaders in the activist community together to discuss the possibilities of organizing a broad-based citizen's movement. We discussed various ideas in a very general way and then spent the next year and a half trying to build enthusiasm for the idea among their various communities.

Finally, in December of 1990 we felt strong enough to start having more concrete discussions and we all agreed to broaden the group by bringing in as many other individuals as we could. This resulted in regular meetings of 30+ individuals. With this larger group in existence, we went to the public in January of 1991 and held a city-wide "town-hall meeting" to sound the public on their ideas. This was followed by public lectures by such notables as Jock Ferguson of the "Globe and Mail", who spoke on corruption in municipal government, and John Sewell, former Mayor of Toronto, who spoke on how planning affects housing and transportation.

All during this time, we had formed working groups to draft a constitution for MDM, form a body of policy we endorsed, and create semi-autonomous "ward Committees" which would eventually form the basis of all power in MDM.



## Election

Due to all the work we had put in over the two preceeding years, an organization, constitution, and body of policy were ready for the 1991 municipal election. This ready-organized entity was able to expand greatly during the campaign period when candidates came forward for MDM endorsement and brought their workers into the fold.

Because of our previous research, we were able to totally dominate debate at all-candidate meetings. MDM propaganda focussed on forcing developers to pay the full cost of servicing lots, preserving local neighbourhoods, and grass-roots democracy through town-hall meetings. It was gratifying to see the speed with which incumbents began to steal planks from our platform.

In our best organized ward our researchers found out that an orphan foundery, owned by Internation Malleable Iron Company (IMICO), was contaminated with heavy metals. As well, toxic waste was being dumped there illegally, and no-one was interested keeping children from playing in what was a very dangerous playground. One of our endorsed ward candidates (myself) and our candidate for Mayor (Peter Meisenheimer) called a press conference and told the press everything. The story made the local paper's front page about five times over the course of the election and was on the local television station many times as well. (Unfortunately, as will be explained below, we didn't gain much name recognition from this.)

In addition, I went to city hall with another concerned resident, and MDM member, and suggested to council that they form a tri-partide committee, including the Mayor, MP and MPP, to investigate the IMICO site. In the interum, we also asked that the city spend some money to improve fencing and put some security guards on site. In addition, we asked any and all members of council to attend a townhall meeting that we would be holding the next week to discuss the issue. Since we had an incumbent who had joined MDM, we knew that the issue would be raised. The proposal was passed, but only after I was attacked by a couple members of council (who lost their seats in the subsequent election).

We held the town-hall meeting as scheduled and were able to bring MDM members, the Mayor and MPP together with the local citizens. After a lively discussion period, the locals passed three resolutions, which were given to the politicians. In addition, a committee was formed that included the elected officials plus concerned individuals. We completely filled the hall (about fifty people were left standing), and gave voice to a very vocal and bitter segment of the community.



After an extremely hard-fought campaign we elected three candidates: two to city council, and one to school board. In addition, three of our other candidates were very close and probably would have won with a larger voter turn-out. Our majority candidate got two-thirds the vote of the incumbent, who was extremely popular. In effect, we badly scared the incumbents and the development establishment, who had never had to run any sort of campaign before.

#### Post-Election Analysis

Our reading of the figures from the election show us that the key to winning elections with a Green-Municipal program is based upon canvassing and vote-pulling. Those polls where our candidates and their workers were able to explain their message in person were the ones where people got votes. In the absence of this sort of work, people vote on the basis of name recognition alone. This plays into the hands of incumbents and "good-ole-boys". Where this work isn't done, issues seem to play almost no part in the decision-making of the 30% of the population that always vote. Party workers should please take note.

#### Election Opposition

Before and during the election we generated a significant amount of class-based opposition from the Guelph business establishment. The reporter following the city-beat in the local paper was ordered to write a column smearing MDM (we were compared to the Communist party) or get other employment. In addition, some candidates called us a "unholy alliance of the Green and Pink". In the last weeks of the election pamphlets attacking MDM as being "undemocratic" were circulated in various parts of the city.

As well, a group identifying themselves as "the Guelph Development Association" put a full page ad in the local daily saying, amongst other things, that

There are candidates in this municipal election that are against growth and economic prosperity. Send a message with your vote that you want Guelph's businesses to grow, for the employment of your children and the prosperity of your neighbours.

As well, the managing editor of "the Mercury" (a Thomson daily) put out a policy denying any coverage of events staged by registered candidates for the election no matter how newsworthy. This meant that the IMICO story was held-back for one day so the editor could recheck all the information we gave the reporter and all reference to MDM and its endorsed candidates could be taken out. This clearly gives an advantage to non-issue based campaigns, and was probably motivated as an attack on MDM.



### Hopes for the Next Year

First of all, we want to continue to hold town hall meetings. It is hoped that the on-going IMICO problem will result in MDM being able to offer concrete results for the citizens in the community. In addition, with two other wards having MDM ward representatives on council, we hope that we can generate enthusiasm for the concept in those areas as well.

As well, several members of MDM have been nominated to work on various municipal boards dealing with things like housing, the local conservation authority, etc.. It is hoped that our message will begin to work its way through the system.

Finally, we hope to use the newly-found sense of community that was forged during the election to build some practical, local initiatives. I am now trying to generate enthusiasm for a land-trust, Local Exchange Trade System (LETS), and some form of co-housing. My read of the situation is that these are now feasible.

### Recommendations and Pit-Falls

#### Process

Many people attracted to Municipal Green projects are "outsiders" who have a terrible need to be listened to. They can be very disruptive to process if they are allowed to dominate meetings. Often the best way to deal with such people is to give them some sort of concrete project to work on. They are often real workhorses if they are given something concrete to work on and that doesn't overtax their abilities.

As well, it is important to realize the limitations of trying to achieve consensus. Many good people are more interested in doing good things than talking. (After all, lots of people have full-time jobs and families!) If you spent too much time worrying about whether everyone is in complete agreement, you will just be driving away many of your potentially best workers. Please set-up a constitution that decentralizes decision-making, delegates authority, and allows for as much flexibility as possible. Plenary sessions should only set policy and appoint committees and officers. City-wide ad-hoc committees and locally-based affinity groups should do all the "nuts and bolts" work. Any other approach is an invitation to organization stagnation.

#### Factionalism

The only way that I can see to build a strong municipal organization is by creating a coalition. This requires an awareness of group dynamics that goes far beyond mere Marxist rhetoric. I would strongly recommend some sort of reading based



upon ancient political theory, such as Sun Tsu, Machiavelli, Sufism, Taoism, the "Sermon on the Mount", etc..

The vast majority of people involved in politics are there for social and emotional reasons. If you attempt to only appeal to reason, you will never build more than a study group. Make sure that you have corn roasts, barbeques, parties, etc.. If you don't make it fun, you'll only attract misfits to your group. Remember Emma Goldman ("I don't want a revolution where I can't dance!").

As well, it is important to remember that you will be attracting people who don't trust or even like each other. The organizers have to constantly be on the watch for any signs of factionalism so they can nip it in the bud. Don't take sides!!! The vast majority of people you meet are good sorts who just need to be shown the other side of the coin. The MDM has had potential battles between men and women, two different wings of the NDP (one pro and one anti-MDM), Greens and NDPers, different sides of a local solid waste controversy, etc.. I have had evenings where I was on the phone for hours settling ruffled feathers between different MDMers in order to keep the coalition together.

Finally, I've found that it is incredibly useful to keep people busy. Every time we have had any problem at all with flagging membership or enthusiasm it has been because we haven't had anything concrete for members to do. Think up realizable, concrete, practical projects that have a real pay-off for participants. Don't be just a talk shop.



## Report on the Founding Meeting of The Confederation of Municipal Greens Kingston, Ont., 1 June 1991.

[THE FOUNDING MEETING OF THE CMG WAS A SIX HOUR MEETING, OF WHICH FOUR AND A HALF HOURS HAVE BEEN RECORDED ON TAPE. PREPARING A REPORT ON THIS MEETING THEREFORE ENTAILLED SOME FAIRLY BROAD EDITORIAL DISCRETION, IN BRINGING THE TRANSCRIBED TEXT INTO A REASONABLE LENGTH, AND SOME STUPENDOUS FEATS OF RECOLLECTION. CONSEQUENTLY, DESPITE MY BEST EFFORTS, ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION, I SURELY NEGLECTED TO REFLECT THE NUANCE OR EMPHASIS OF PEOPLE'S POSITION. I APOLOGIZE IN ADVANCE IF YOUR POSITION WAS ONE OF THOSE SO MALIGNED, BUT PUTTING WORDS INTO PEOPLE'S MOUTHS WAS THE NATURE OF THE EXERCISE - ED.]

The meeting of Canadian/Quebecois members of the Left Green Network, which resulted in the formation of the Confederation of Municipal Greens, started on an early Friday afternoon, in a bright, well lit Queen's University classroom. After an initial round of personal introductions, an agenda was set that called first for reports by representatives - broadly speaking, there were no formal group delegates - from each of the eight municipalities in attendance: Quebec City, Montreal, Kingston, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver.

The original idea was that each should report on the states of popular groups, ecological action and Green initiatives in their municipality, as well as giving a general sense of the political climate. Those different political climates, however, led to some considerable divergence of emphasis in the individual reports.

Nick Ternette began, for Winnipeg. He started with a brief historical overview of Green initiatives, which mostly emerged out of a 1987 conference. At that time there was strong commitment to form Green political structures, but no interest in a formal party. Out of this conference emerged the three central Green initiatives in the intervening years: Greening the Forks, the leading ecological group in Winnipeg, dealing with urban planning issues; a LETS system coordinated by Ross Dobson, now involving 150 participants; and Links, a magazine trying to forge ties between the feminist, peace, ecology and social justice groups. In connection to these initiatives, Nick also drew attention to the Greening in recent years of two national magazines based in Winnipeg: Canadian Dimension and City Magazine.

Among popular groups, the areas that seemed most encouraging to Nick were the peace movement's inroads in establishing connections with the



aboriginal community, and the strength of the women's movement. He felt that eco-feminism had played a role in the latter's strength, and mentioned in this regard a presentation by fellow Left Green Marcia Nozick through the auspices of the National Action Council on the Status of Women.

Nick was very disturbed, however, about the crisis of dedemocratization confronting city hall. The on-going erosion of quantitative representational presence was undermining the very fabric of the minimum requirements of municipal democracy: the 50 councillors of 1971 had been reduced to 29 in 1977, and now the provincial government was intent on reducing the number of councillors to 15. This dedemocratization, combined with further provincial legislation to raise the maximum campaign funding limit for municipal elections by double its current amount, would turn city government over to the developers and the suburbs, hastening the disintegration of the city's downtown.

This was the context Winnipeg Left Greens found themselves in as they discussed whether or not to form a political party, e.g. Ecology Winnipeg, along the lines of Ecology Montreal. Up until now, communication had been very informal.

Marcia Nozick (Winnipeg) added that Greening the Forks has attempted to broaden out, particularly in establishing contact with agricultural communities, and cultivating local food networks.

Ross Dobson (Winnipeg) felt that what was needed was a restaurant or cafe to focus the Green community. He thought that this would soon materialize. Furthermore, Ross anticipated the forming of a party for the next municipal election. This Ecology Winnipeg - a name he had already registered - may organize around the issue of anti-mosquito pesticide spraying. This has been an issue of considerable concern in Winnipeg.

Dimitri Roussopoulos (Montreal) was perplexed that there was no Green municipal structure in Winnipeg considering the city's importance in Canadian Left history, and the number of outstanding people involved in Green work there. The issue, though, shouldn't be mosquito spraying, but the decimation of the city's democracy - defending the most basic conditions of municipal democracy. This, Dimitri insisted, should be "a clarion call to the Left," uniting the Left and Greens in a common struggle.

Kent Gerecke (Winnipeg) explained that there was a great divide in Winnipeg between those working around questions of ecology and economics. So that, a group like Choices, directed to recovering funding for the welfare state, is consuming the Left's energies.

Marcia felt that the Left in Manitoba has never understood decentralism, so to have them organize around an issue like municipal democracy seemed unthinkable.



Nick concurred, Choices is the main social democratic coalition, but it has become an NDP front, even though it has explored more innovative ways of satirizing the neo-conservative agenda.

Ross reiterated Marcia's point, some what, explaining that they were up against a brick wall of traditional Leftist, centralist thinking - "a politics of the past," trying to keep the welfare state together.

Eric Pineault reported for Quebec City. He talked about the main Green group there, Les Ami(e)s de Terre. Unlike the anglophone Friends of the Earth, it is a grassroots organization. It seems, though, to be having some problems with effectiveness. They had done a lot of reports on the James Bay issue, but only - in Eric's quaint phrase - "blah, blah" had come of it. More impressive had been their mobilization against the Gulf War. The other ecology groups have primarily a lobbyist orientation.

The current party in power municipally was the progressive Rassemblement Populaire. In their campaign they had promised municipal democracy based on neighbourhood councils, with executive power. Nothing had materialized thus far, though, and it looked like more "blah, blah." But Eric's own community group, and Les Ami(e)s, have been working around this issue. The former was also working on a community garden.

Eric explained that the neighbourhood council in his own community had arisen out of the struggle to prevent the government from turning the neighbourhood into a highway. Neighbourhood councils seemed like the right focus for the young Left Green tendency in Quebec City to take - the province is beyond hope, and the city is controlled by the suburbs. Last autumn they had organized a conference on neighbourhood councils, with people from Montreal and Burlington, Vermont. Oriented to Eric's own neighbourhood, 150 attended the conference. Eric felt that his neighbourhood was a particularly fertile one for this kind of organizing: primarily composed of students, welfare recipients and "some yuppies"; 50% unemployed, 20% university educated; and among apartment building tenants, 17% were organized into cooperatives.

Also of interest was the recent founding of Le Fond du Solidarité des Groupes Populaires, a popular self-managed non-government funding organization composed of 10 social justice groups. They have one full-time employee who fund raises and keeps financial records. Le Fond also funds a community newspaper in Eric's neighbourhood, published 4-6 times a year, at 1500 copies, and 12 pages an issue.

There has also been work toward local self-reliant economic development alternatives to the dominant trend in Quebec City: tourism-driven development. Eric believed that this effort has suffered from not having an official Green organization to support such initiatives.



His estimation of other potential forces for change was pretty bleak. Social justice groups were basically old-line social democrats who just want the money back. Labour was inconsequential, from a Green perspective. The women's movement, despite some eco-feminist rhetoric, was basically reformist, liberal feminism. And there had been a real failure thus far in establishing formal links with the aboriginal community.

**Elizabeth Anderson** reported for Vancouver. She spoke at length about a malaise in the B.C. Green movement, and the role of the NDP in helping to foster that ill-ease. In the last municipal election, she said, everyone was "Green." But all this was terribly shallow, usually without any actual ecological analysis.

One positive sign was the formation of the Tin Wis coalition. But even this, she feared, was being overly controlled by its NDP elements. As **Elizabeth** explained at one point, the discrepancy here lies largely in the NDP's image of itself as providing a benevolent government that would be better trusted to protect ecological integrity than decentralized, democratic community institutions, which the NDP believed would be controlled by the likes of the forestry industry.

She was more encouraged, though, when she discussed the Healing the Earth Conference which she had been involved in. The conference brought together Third World aboriginal women from around the world (CIDA sponsored countries, only, though - CIDA funded the conference!) In light of the endlessly trite and banal Green commercialism that we are becoming accustomed to hearing, **Elizabeth** was impressed with these women's insistence on the importance of resolving neo-colonialist issues as a indivisible aspect of resolving the ecological crisis. This also led into an extensive discussion of the assertive struggle of B.C. aboriginal peoples, particularly the Haida.

**Elizabeth** concluded by emphasizing the importance, and difficulties, of working beyond traditional entrenched polarities, especially between labour and ecologists. They were planning a conference in the autumn intended to help bridge some of those differences. And she mentioned that Tin Wis was looking to undertake a project in Action Research. **Larry Anderson** (Vancouver) elaborated, the Action Research Plan came out of the Women's Research Centre in Vancouver - oriented to neighbourhood research, it addressed the fundamental question, research for who? This seemed like a valuable tool for the dual purpose of popular self-empowered knowledge production, and community self-organization.

**Nick** asked about the B.C NDP Green Caucus. He had heard that it was the one NDP formation that could lay a legitimate claim to a Green perspective. Was this true, is it a real alternative, or just more PR? He also was curious about how popular groups fit into all this. **Elizabeth** acknowledged that the



Green caucus was for real, but explained that it was hopelessly marginalized within the NDP itself. Larry seemed to touch a cord with most present as he talked about the prevalence in B.C. of an anti-establishment establishment that tends to take over all manner of popular groups, gradually submerging them into the NDP.

Chris Lea reported for Toronto. He spoke of it as a gigantic city with gigantic problems, and discussed some of the grassroots groups that had arisen to address specific problems: Bring Back the Don (River), and the Railway Lands Committee. Apparently, though, there is some concern among the original organizers of the former that it was being coopted by the business community. He also talked about the Green Plan put forward by the latter, with its call for the old railway lands in the centre of downtown Toronto to be used to develop an ecologically-balanced community, rather than the energy guzzling office tower complex that was planned.

Chris discussed the city's garbage crisis, with its landfill space nearly exhausted, and no significant further space appearing to be on the immediate horizon. He felt that there was a reasonably good recycling program in operation, but conceded that it didn't really accomplish very much.

He was more encouraged by the development of the municipal Community Health Boards, which he was personally involved with. The city's Board of Health, which took a wide-ranging interest in all aspects of health across the city, had established five regional Community Health Boards to advise it. Chris saw these as genuinely community based boards that assured the broadest consideration of health issues by the city's Board of Health. Recently, on their own initiative, three of these community boards had undertaken to have themselves directly elected through community meetings.

Chris also discussed some of the liberal reforms that were of issue in Toronto: the Crombie Commission's report on the waterfront, with its vaguely ecological recommendations; and the shifting of the civilian board overseeing the police toward a more critical perspective with the appointment of a new chairwoman. [The former chairwoman, rank apologist for police abuses, has of course recently become mayor - ed.] The popular movements, in general, appeared to be in a holding pattern, as people were waiting to see what would become of the new NDP government in Ontario.

At this point, Chris turned the floor over to Mike McConkey (Toronto) to speak on the role of Toronto's Green City Plan Group. This group had come together to produce a Green city plan for Toronto around which coalitions of popular groups and neighbourhood democratic institutions could organize, through an on-going process of critique and revision. The short-term goal was to have a slate of Green candidates emerge out of the neighbourhoods



that would allow intervention in the municipal elections without resort to a formal party, with its conflicting allegiances, between the vertical allegiances of representative and constituency, and the horizontal allegiances within the party itself. The longer term goal was to help cultivate enduring counter institutions of grassroots opposition that could ultimately issue into forms of dual power.

For a number of reasons, including dissent within the group about its purposes and processes, it appeared that this strategy would not materialize for the upcoming election. Mike expressed his personal belief, though, that the strategy was a sound one, with tremendous potential.

After the formal presentation there was a wide-ranging discussion among several members clarifying the nature of the Ontario Greens, and elaborating the significance of the Ontario Green's Conference, "Green Municipalism," scheduled for the subsequent weekend.

Frank de Jong (Ottawa) explained that the Ontario Greens were a fully decentralized alliance of local chapters, concentrating upon concerns of their immediate area, and occasionally coordinating action or common projects. And, Frank added, "there are policy conferences...though not much ever gets done."

Mike, a member of the chapter hosting the conference on the following weekend, explained that it arose largely out of frustration with the opportunism and theoretical incoherence that characterized much of the Ontario Greens participation in the recent provincial election - particularly in the Toronto region. The conference was intended to stimulate a critical discussion of such issues and their alternatives within the Ontario Greens, and perhaps attract some of the generic Greens in the area who have traditionally avoided the Ontario Greens for the kinds of reasons just cited.

Harry Garfinkle reported for Edmonton. He talked about the tendency in Alberta to broaden the Greens from the role of a party into more that of a movement. As part of this initiative, the Green Party in Alberta was using its tax deductible status to help out Green-minded popular groups in the province which had no connection to electoral dimensions. Also, under the Societies Act in Alberta, they set up the Gaia as a sponsoring Ecumenical Movement. This has allowed a more flexible structure for outreach activities.

Harry also spoke about Clean Slate, the controversial local Edmonton ecological group. It would probably be supporting candidates in the upcoming municipal elections. Recently, it had been holding public forums on the problem of local garbage dumps.

Another interesting group was the Alberta Environmental Alliance, which - in addition to offering facilitating services to different groups - had also held public meetings recently around a variety of issues. Of particular note



was a satirical evening in which they gave mock awards to those who have done the most damage around ecological issues. Harry emphasized the need for greater use of humour as a Green movement tool.

Alberta Greens have been attempting to integrate activities, having regular meetings. One idea that grew from this endeavour was that of developing shadow cabinets, to publicize alternative Green policy.

Harry concluded with a strong appeal for the Green movement to work hard on the programmatic integration of economics and ecology.

Len Bush reported for Ottawa. He began by trying to give a sense of the busy political atmosphere that filled the Canadian capital. The presence of non-governmental organizations, and the offices of oppositional movements such as the aboriginal peoples, contributed much to this atmosphere.

The current municipal council is controlled by a boosterist majority, but there is evidence of the grassroots resurging. The main oppositional force at this point is the Civic Forum, but it is primarily a vehicle for the NDP. The main struggles are over development issues.

The women's movement appeared to be rising again from its recent period of professionalization: three new feminist newspapers have gone into operation; there has been a lot of organizing among women's shelters; and a new feminist spirituality has been increasingly prominent. There has also been lots of solidarity work with aboriginal peoples - treaty rights being an especially important focus of activity. Following a series of murders of homosexuals, the gay and lesbian movement has also been reviving, with the arrival of a Queer Nation group to town.

The peace movement has been especially prominent with the recent Gulf War. During this period four coalitions of groups opposing the war came together. There were also spontaneous rallies against the war on Parliament Hill almost daily - though, these latter, apparently, were sometimes dominated by the sectarian Left. Another high profile concern of the peace movement has been ARMEX. At present the military hardware show was on hold, perhaps because its sponsors feared further embarrassing demonstrations, as in the past. An idea circulated within the peace movement has been to counter ARMEX with a counter conversion conference - exhibiting the resources for conversion from military to peaceful production techniques.

Len concluded by briefly discussing the Ottawa Greens. They had about 40-50 general members, and about 10-12 active members. Two of their upcoming projects were to be a municipal newspaper dealing with social justice and ecology issues, due to be in circulation in the summer, and a bioregional conference planned for the autumn. In the recent past they had coordinated action with other Greens to target certain high-profile ecological villains: i.e., McDonalds and Ontario Hydro.



**Dan Roy** (Ottawa) mentioned a couple other, related initiatives. The first was the role of the Class-war Mountain-Bike Club, anti-authoritarians, who have drawn attention to the harm of the oil-auto-state complex by doing actions such as deliberately clogging up city traffic on their bicycles. Also, during the Gulf war, the Greens protested an Ottawa auto-show as another means of drawing attention to these kinds of connections.

**Frank** added that there was a LETSystem in operation, and expressed considerable enthusiasm about the upcoming municipal election, that seemed certain to be fought-out over clear pro- and anti-development agendas.

**Elizabeth** asked about outreach by the Greens to Hull and the suburbs. The Ottawa members said they saw the latter as a major challenge still confronting them. The suburban question was more complex. It involved organizing with people whose livelihoods often depended upon the very industries and institutions that Greens seek to transform.

Arising from this latter point was a brief discussion about the difficulty of integrating one's life with one's philosophical beliefs.

**Kurt Halliday** reported for Kingston. Kurt didn't have a whole hell of a lot encouraging to say. Queen's is a conservative university, in a conservative town. There just wasn't very much happening.

Greens have been an on-again-off-again affair in Kingston over the last few years, but never seem to hold together. That seemed to leave a leftish magazine that has been published under various guises over the years, and Action for Social Change, associated with the Alliance for Non-Violent Action.

Feminism played a significant role at Queen's, but seemed to have little impact on the larger community. There is some work done around prisoner support in the surrounding penitentiaries - especially, though not exclusively, with aboriginal prisoners.

Not much more than that! There was always the International Socialists... And there's graffiti...

**Unidentified speaker**, who identified himself as a Queen's faculty member, explained that he felt there was a strong anti-university bias in the small core who overlapped Action for Social Change and the Kingston Greens. He also felt that those responsible as contact people for the Ontario Greens in Kingston were making no effort to keep a vital chapter in place, and that they made no effort to inform others of Green activities.

**Kurt** concurred with this latter characterization. There followed a lengthy discussion about the local Ontario Greens contact persons that revolved around allegations, most made by the **unidentified speaker**, that they were exclusionary and elitist.



Dimitri Roussopoulos reported for Montreal. He said that there were many single issue ecology groups, but they are all reformist. And, while Montreal has one of the oldest histories of social justice groups in North America, they too were essentially reformist, pleading for revival of the welfare state.

Dimitri spoke at length about the history of the MCM in Montreal, but concentrating on the post-1986 phase, after they gained power in city hall. Four MCMers who resigned over disaffection with the party's exercise of power, came together with a number of others in late '88-'89 for discussions about forming a new Left municipal alternative. A unified Left force, however, did not emerge. The former MCMers did not agree with others involved with the discussion, that the new alternative should be expressly Green in its orientation. The MCMers thus founded their own party: the Democratic Coalition. They had initially wanted to establish a popular coalition, along the lines sketched out by Mike in his discussion of the Toronto Green City Plan group, but this never materialized, and they wound up forming a conventional party. The others involved in those discussions decided to form what became Ecology Montreal.

Dimitri added here a caveat in defense of the term "party." He pointed out that it had had a much more benign meaning in the 19th century, akin to the term "association," before it had been distorted by electoralism.

In 1990 Ecology Montreal contended 21 of the 50 districts in the municipal elections. The Democratic Coalition, with whom Ecology Montreal had a non-aggression pact, contended 25 of the districts. While three of the (ex-MCM) incumbents of the Democratic Coalition got elected, and none of Ecology Montreal's candidates accomplished this, in terms of 2nd, 3rd and 4th positionings, Ecology Montreal did better than its counterpart.

In the end, the entire experience proved to be a difficult one. Partially because the MCM was not nearly as unpopular as the Left generally had thought: they won 42 of the 50 districts. Perhaps more problematic still, because the communitarian-urban Left was split between the two new parties, Ecology Montreal had a disproportionate number of federal and provincial Greens involved in its campaign, consequently skewing the debate and organizational direction for the worse. These Greens saw the election as an election like any other election, and hence lacked a radical vision of municipal potentiality. Since the election, energy has been severely diminished.

Dimitri then went into a long excursus on Quebec nationalism. In his words, "out of the darkest recesses of the closet has emerged the new tribalism." It has subsumed all forms of radical politics in Montreal. This was particularly evident around the Oka crisis. The struggle to publicize issues related to James Bay has been another site of intense conflict with



the new Quebec nationalism. In his estimation, municipal options are almost nil presently, amid this nationalist hysteria.

There followed, a brief discussion of the federal and Quebec provincial Greens. Dimitri sweepingly dismissed these. Particularly problematic for the Quebec Greens is their paralysis around the national question, largely due to Quebec bourgeois nationalism's distaste for ecological questions which - as the on-going censorship of the James Bay issue in the Montreal press indicates - cuts severely against its grain. Eric said that the Quebec Green's program was Alvin Toffler's New Wave.

**Unidentified speaker** (Montreal) explained that the provincial government's incompetence in dealing with the PCB fire just outside Montreal revealed its complete inability to address ecological issues. He also mentioned the Montreal massacre, and the prevalence of violence against women and homosexuals in the city.

He went on to express a commitment to Quebec nationalism. While acknowledging that it was far from ideal, he felt a sovereign Quebec was a major advance over the current situation.

He concluded by expressing despair about the lack of a Left movement in the country.

**Gigi Dillon** (Montreal) felt that the trivial things of daily life were of central importance. They had set up a community paper in the Jeanne Mance district (the one Dimitri ran in); established a research project on the state of the environment in the city; and formed an education committee, integrating community ideas - all this, to affect the quality of daily life, and move Ecology Montreal from party to movement. But she sees a problem in prioritization - how to politicize in the Montreal context.

**Marcia** asked if Ecology Montreal had campaigned on the issues of Oka and James Bay. Dimitri said they hadn't, but they had participated in major Oka solidarity protests during the campaign. This contributed to a certain nationalist xenophobic reaction that marked the campaign.

Eric pointed out that Quebec nationalism in Montreal was distinct and different from nationalism through out the rest of Quebec. He also felt that the censorship of James Bay in the press was not only due to Quebec nationalism, but was also due to the lack of a significant Green movement to push it onto the public agenda. He felt that Dimitri's portrayal depicted Quebec nationalism as nearly fascist, and reiterated that this depiction was excessive and referred to a uniquely Montreal experience. Dimitri agreed that it was not fascist, but he feared it could lead to fascism.

**Chris** asked how Ecology Montreal was structured, how decisions were made.

Dimitri: chaos.



On this appropriate note, we took a much needed break and, nearing exhaustion, returned to begin the inadequately small part of our time still left to discuss the burning question, how do we proceed? Or do we?? The tape picks up this conversation in process. To my recollection, nothing of major import is missed here. The discussion at this point is about what name we would use for our association, if we were indeed to form an association. The first speaker heard on the tape is the **Queen's faculty member** who is arguing that Left and Green are bound up together. In this, they present a clear alternative to authoritarian, centralist Leftism.

At this point, **Dimitri** proposes the name, "Confederation of Municipal Greens." He suggests that the CMG should be based on the principle of internationalist solidarity, and as such should be a member of the continental congress of the LGN. He also suggests that the LGN's program should be taken as the CMG's point of departure - intending to improve upon this document, without reinventing the wheel.

**Chris** agreed with Dimitri's proposal. He felt that the term "Left" brought too much baggage to a new group. **Eric** said that the proposed name would translate well into French: Confédération des Verts Municipales.

**An Unidentified person** asked at this point what was the purpose in the CMG, to distance ourselves from the Green Parties? Appearing to disapprove of this idea she emphasized that we needed analytical diversity.

**Harry** concurred with this position. He insisted that we shouldn't be cutting ourselves off from the thousands of existing environmental groups who, for all their failures, have achieved a certain level of consciousness. Whether considered coopted or reformist, those with an ecological consciousness are worth working with. He reiterated the point that "Left" has too many negative connotations for too many people. **Harry** also preferred using the term "ecumenical" over the suggested term "internationalist," with its suggestion that the primary unit in the world remained for us the nation state.

**Marcia** was uncertain about the term municipal. Is it, she wondered, an artificial boundary? If so, is it an ecological idea, considering its connection with an attitude toward land as divisible property?

**Harry** asked if bioregion wasn't in fact a better organizing designation? **Marcia** asked if community wasn't a better term, with its human base? **Queen's faculty guy** suggested, instead, the term "local." **Elizabeth**, perhaps responding to Harry's earlier point, emphasized that we would still be working with other groups outside the confederation. And she wondered just how we would network? She, too, felt community was a better organizing focus.

**Eric** liked Dimitri's suggestion, because in the name it referred to a particular way of changing society. Community is nice, but it doesn't have this further connotation. He also felt that Confederation of "Local" Greens



could lead to a confusion in which people mistook us for a local chapter of the provincial Green party. Eric also expressed support for the term "internationalist," we don't want to recreate the nation state, nor only save our own skins, but to work for solutions that transcend these organizing schemes.

Nick preferred "community," but could work with "municipal." He also found the term "Left Green" not very useful, due to its connotations. He would like to include the term "radical," because of the dangers of cooptation, and its clarifying of issues - distinguishing us from all reformist politics. Nick went on to express strong sentiments about the USAcenricism of the Left Green Network's program. He insisted that our content must be radical, and municipal in focus. We must focus on forming a radical Green municipal structure.

Kent solicited a clarification, that if the CMG were formed, the members in each individual municipality would remain autonomous to pursue their own goals in their own ways. There was clear and audible agreement in the room on this decentralist aspect.

Queen's faculty member argued that "Internationalist" implied continuation of the nation state. He insisted also that we must get the term "Left" in there somehow. In his estimation, we are "libertarian communists." He felt somehow the idea of "left-libertarian" should be included.

[Though it is not on the tapes, this argument against "internationalism," also raised earlier by Harry, was eventually addressed by some one (Dimitri or Eric?) in pointing out its confusion of the linguistic/cultural formation of nation with the power structure of the state. Hence, while "nation" denotes the human fact of language and culture diversity, it does not necessarily presuppose continuance of the state - ed.]

Mike, entirely predictably, trotted out the "New Confederation League" proposal, one more time.

Gigi argued that municipal libertarianism identified one with where one actually was. It orients us to struggle against centralized power right where we live.

Eric talked about his work in his neighbourhood and how that connects to the relevance of a broader umbrella organization. The emergence of Green municipalities depends upon the solidarity of a Confederation that can provide mutual defense and support in the face of certain hostility from other levels of government.

Len said that the name provided a powerful vision, but he was more interested in the questions of concrete organizational structure. What would such a confederation do?

Roberta Simpson (Winnipeg) said she would go along with the name, and emphasized the importance of solidarity around common struggle as a central value in the CMG.



**Marcia** supported the idea of a confederation of autonomous groups, and agreed with the idea of Green, but continued to feel reticent about the term "municipal." She too wanted to know what the CMG would be in practice.

**Elizabeth** was concerned that the term "municipal" served to confine our Green visions. She offered the example of the recent Vancouver municipal election, during which the Green program was continually criticized for addressing issues "not within municipal jurisdiction." However, in the end, she felt that this problem could be worked around: we would be defining the term in our struggles. **Elizabeth** also expressed discomfort about the term "Green," given its on-going cooptation. She concluded by suggesting that she saw the CMG best serving as a clearinghouse to facilitate our sharing of critiques, strategies and experiences.

**Harry** raised further questions about the absence of definition of structure. He reiterated his preference for a bioregional focus.

As an aside, **Kent** suggested a newsletter to facilitate the kinds of ideas put forward by Elizabeth. He said that he was leaning toward developing a community based practice, but he saw the term municipal as more clearly and distinctly distinguishing us from the federal and provincial level of political activity. Furthermore, he saw this focus as thoroughly connected to the new citizenship politics that we could, and had to, recover.

**Larry** felt that communication would be the central component in a confederation. This would provide practical advantage without draining the already severely depleted energy in each locality.

**Nick** felt it was essential to have a confederation to enforce our radical municipal agenda, and provide support and solidarity in practice. He also reiterated the decentralist position, that the CMG could not in any way dictate to the local municipal group. Relating to the concern expressed by Elizabeth, **Nick** pointed out that the success of the nuclear freeze movement demonstrates how we can re-define the domain of the municipality in struggle.

Finally, with energy indeed severely depleted, and after a brief discussion of whether we should break for dinner before coming to a resolution, it was at last decided that **Dimitri** would first offer an elaboration on his proposal that might address some of the concerns raised in the discussion. **Dimitri** proposed that what we were considering doing was to establish a relation of confederation between individuals. We do not represent municipalist groups, but individuals who aspire to build such groups. Then, soon as history allows, the CMG can become a confederation of municipal groups, when such exist in practice. This is our interm objective. Beyond that, our long term objective, with the eventual success of these groups, would be the reconstitution of the CMG as a confederation of Green municipalities.



This, Dimitri stated emphatically, is a program - it is a revolutionary program! And, in his estimation, if we could go back to our individual municipalities and say that we had met with others from cities across the continent and agreed to this program, this would be inspiring and solidifying for people. In addition, it would help stimulate a tension, and a debate, in our own localities that would further the objectives of libertarian municipalism in its very placing of them upon the political agenda in a formal manner. Furthermore, though only a confederation of individuals at this point, our action would nonetheless present a serious challenge to the federal and provincial Green parties to collapse. At this point, Harry took exception, and insisted that we didn't want anything to collapse, we had to work on all levels. On this point, the two agreed to differ.

Dimitri went on to argue that central to this project would be an educational process, and pointed out how we already had the resources to pursue this process. There were relevant books, he cited in particular Kent Gerecke's book that Dimitri had just published at Black Rose, on city politics. There was City Magazine for our more polished arguments and analyses. And, Mike's bulletin initiative, if properly supported, could become the organ of internal dialogue within the CMG. With these points clarified, Dimitri went on to repeat his earlier proposal: the name, the Confederation of Municipal Greens; the principle of internationalism, including participation in the Left Green Network; and taking the LGN's program as our point of departure for a working program.

This elaboration, combined perhaps with some points in support of a municipal focus made by Elizabeth, Kent and Nick just preceding, seemed to settle the doubts and clarify a sense of purpose. Only a brief further discussion was required before the decision was made to test consensus on each of Dimitri's original three points, plus the suggestion for Mike to establish a newsletter that would be funded by the CMG membership fees. All these points were consented to by those present. This included at least one individual from each of the municipalities that had been in attendance at the beginning of the meeting, oh so long ago(!) - with the possible exception of Ottawa(?)

Before finishing up, it was also agreed that the CMG would meet at least annually, during the Society of Socialist Studies sessions of the Learned Societies Conference, and organize various panels under the auspices of that Society. The next such meeting will be held in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, May 28-31, 1992.

Finally, we went to go have dinner...

...and Gigi and Dimitri got lost...!



The Society for Socialist Studies will meet at the 1992 Learned Societies Conference from Thursday 28 May through Sunday 31 May. Our local coordinator is Iain Galloway. The University of Prince Edward Island central Learned Societies organisation is headed by Dr. John Crossley.

#### THEME FOR 1992: 500 YEARS OF RESISTANCE

The theme for 1992 will revolve around the 500 years of imperialism and oppression since Columbus landed in the western hemisphere in 1492. This will involve an examination of the nature of the imperialist system past and present. It will include an examination of slavery, the dispossession of aboriginal peoples, and the class and national struggle which characterize the world capitalist system.

In the past we have had one "theme" speaker. This year we are aiming for four such speakers so as to deal adequately with the various aspects of the "500 years" theme. The idea is that each speaker will make a presentation in the course of the four days and then they will come together as a panel on the concluding afternoon (Sunday, May 31). So far we have concluded that either Harry Magdoff or Paul Sweezy, along with Hans Koning, will be speaking on the role of slavery as part of the imperialist system. Monthly Review will be publishing a special issue on slavery in the summer of 1992. Glenda Simms has also agreed to be a keynote speaker. We are still concluding arrangements for other theme speakers and they will be announced in the next Bulletin.

#### FINAL CALL FOR PAPERS

Paper proposals are invited for the sessions listed below. Please submit copies to the session coordinator(s) as listed after each abstract and to each of the following: Lorne Brown, Programme Chair, Society for Socialist Studies, Political Science, University of Regina, Regina SK S4S 0A2, Fax: 306-585-4815; National Office, Society for Socialist Studies, 471 University College, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg MB R3T 2M8, Fax: 204-261-0021, E-Mail: VORST2@CCM.UMANITOBA.CA Deadline: December 1, 1991 (or 2 weeks after receipt of this Bulletin).

#### Local States or City States, Municipalities as a Challenge for Socialist Democracy

The city is the last unspoken frontier in the national debate and may indeed contain ways to address issues of radical importance to the quality of democracy in Canada and Québec. The political role of local states, facing constraints from higher levels of

government, is increasingly being challenged as more and more individuals and urban social movements look to municipalities as systems in need of a greater political presence and voice. This presents a direct challenge to socialist practice, which has been overly state-centred on the national and provincial levels. Municipalities are presently being radically redefined as the place for pursuing ecological, feminist, redistributive and inter-cultural agendas. Can we think of the city as a political space endowed with autonomy, accountability and greater jurisdictional powers, hitherto held on higher state levels? Are the economic and social processes of globalisation in fact creating the necessity for a political emergence of cities? Given the many versions of nation-state building emerging in the current business-led constitutional debate within Canada and Québec, we might well ask: whither socialism? whither the municipal?

There is presently a fair amount of work being done in this area by progressive scholars in Britain, the US and France. It would be of interest to see some Canadian contributions.

Henri Lustiger-Thaler, Sociology, Concordia U, Sir George Williams Campus, 1455 de Maisonneuve West, Montréal PQ, H3G 1M8. Ph: 514-848-2140; fax: 514-848-3494.