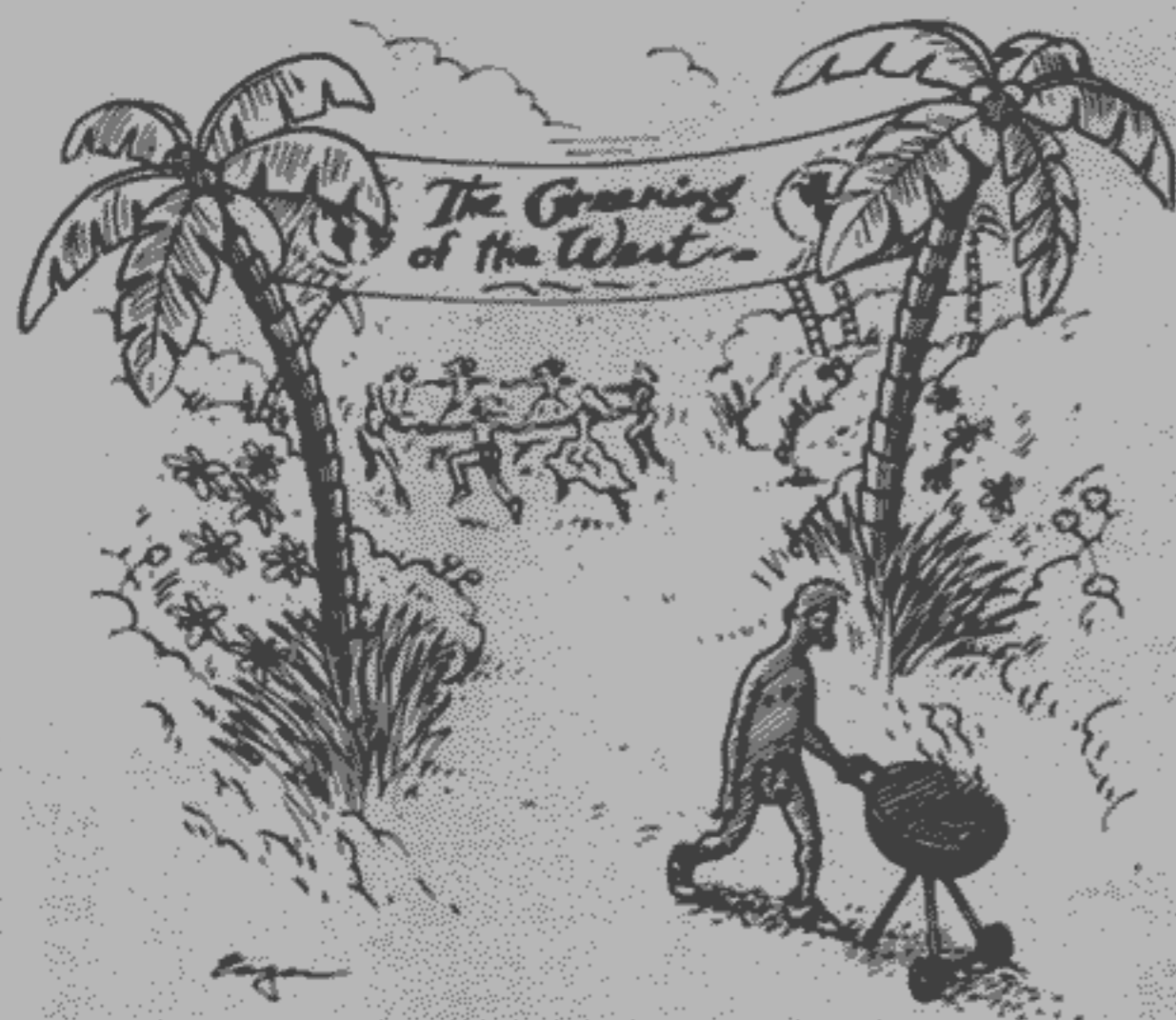


Tom Englar



## Green Eggs and Miso

I will not stand in line for miso soup. It's an insult to my intelligence," complained the self-appointed director of the new Militant Carnivores Caucus—who remained anonymous for good reason—at last week's Greening the West conference in the hills near La Honda. The miso dispute was just one of many hot issues mulled over by roughly 900 activists at the two-day conference, billed as the first major West Coast gathering of the international political movement known as the Greens, a force that has already changed the face of European politics.

Founded in the '70s by West German activist Petra Kelly, the Greens contingent is now a major player on the European political stage. "We're neither left nor right, but ahead," goes the motto that Kelly helped popularize. Rejecting most mainstream political entities, the Greens say they stand for "a whole new bottom-up political party," according to Berkeley new age physicist and prominent Green theorist Fritjof Capra, one of the speakers at the laid-back gathering.

While one denim-clad speaker held the attendees' attention with a detailed discourse on the practice of active nonviolence, Capra was busy signing up members for his Elmwood Institute, which has quickly become one of the main think tanks for local Greens. "The essential problems of our time are not part of the political dialog," Capra said, adding that the "Green perspective is to put life at the center of politics."

While no official Green position yet exists on a wide variety of issues—like abortion and tax policies—there is consensus on enough issues to let the organizational push go forward, according to Capra. "We all do agree about protecting the ozone level," he says when asked what holds the loose-knit group together.

"I've been at this since 1968," adds carpenter Howard Hawkins, who traveled from his Vermont home to camp in San Mateo County's Jones Gulch and join in the power pow-wow. Hawkins says it became clear to him in 1968 that neither of the two major political parties offers any real hope for change. "We haven't lost," he says of his long search for meaningful political alternatives. "We just haven't won yet."

Hawkins and Capra, like Kelly in West Germany, say the time is ripe for Americans to join the new international grassroots movement that argues for "ecological wisdom, nonviolence, decentralization, respect for diversity and post-patriarchal values."

Indeed, it is the internationalization of the movement that seemed to delight the conference participants the most, since a global vision of

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cooperation is one of the most cherished Green values. "This is an international movement," Mendicino County's Marylyn Scottbrandon told the gathering. "Wherever we go, we have family and community," she said as applause and cheers swept over the mellow crowd.

It was at lunch that the Great Miso Debate erupted, as two very green Greens were prevented from firing up their barbecue, on which they hoped to char some steaks. They soon found out, however, that a steak barbecue within sniffing range of the

"Feminists for Animal Rights" information booth was a very poor move.

"The environmental movement is for more than just the new age types," one of the carnivores—hiding his name tag—vainly protested when directed toward the miso soup line. But his protest was for naught, as conference organizers prevailed and the meat-eaters settled for tofu-vegie burgers, a chance to stay at the conference and permission to organize their own caucus.

"It's the disenchantment with the Democrats and Republicans that fuels this movement," Hawkins said as she addressed the crowd, adding that the biggest practical obstacle facing the Greens right now is Jesse Jackson. "The problem is that the Rainbow Coalition is demobilizing the activists by sucking them into the Democratic party."

Hawkins added that the Democratic Party—like the Republican party—is dominated by "real estate interests and cold warriors," who want to keep the practical exercise of power far from the hands of individual citizens. "I think it will take a nonviolent revolution to change this country," Hawkins offered, as a magic mushroom deal quietly went down a few feet from the booth where he was hawking the Green pamphlets that he writes in his spare time.

"We're at the stage that the Germans were at in 1977," Hawkins said, noting that all types, from "Malthusians to Marxists, now call themselves Greens. Personally, I'm a left Green." According to Hawkins, Greens have already won seats on the New Haven, Connecticut City Council and Wisconsin's Bayfield County Board of Supervisors. "There is a lot of hope represented here," Capra said, surveying the ranks.

Meanwhile, the Militant Carnivores had just finished their tofu snacks and were washing them down with the dreaded miso. In fact, while listening attentively to an attractive young woman wearing an animal rights T-shirt, one of the meat-eaters seemed to undergo a transformation of sorts. "Now that's two cups of water for every tablespoon of miso powder?" he asked with evident sincerity. And the woman smiled. —Hal Plotkin

Information on upcoming activities of the newly-formed Peninsula Greens can be obtained from Neil Harris by calling 415/327-3388.