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Updated:

Tuesday, August 29,  
2006  
8:45 AM

## Commentary: Really Being Green, Not Just Whistling Yourself Green

By Willi Paul (08-29-06)

We got a thousand points of light, For the homeless man

We got a kinder, gentler, Machine gun hand

We got department stores, and toilet paper

Got styrofoam boxes, for the ozone layer

Got a man of the people, says keep hope alive

Got fuel to burn, got roads to drive."

—Neil Young and Crazy Horse

"Keep on Rockin' in the Free World" (1989)

I made the wondrous leap into sustainability about three months ago. It felt like a good wrap for all of my past mistakes and a chance to re-birth into the groovy green world of Bates, Schwarzenegger and Gore. Interesting three-some, eh? Since then I've learned that the rhetoric is far out-pacing real change but we've got tons of visions, festivals, organic crunchies and sustainable MBA programs ready to go when the planet shifts. By the way, on the evening of Aug. 25, there were a total of 18 full- and part-time sustainable/green jobs listed in the Bay Area section of craigslist.

Tom Bates whistled himself Green in his Aug. 25 campaign shout in the Daily Planet: "I am running for re-election to ensure we continue to make Berkeley as green as it can be." (Commentary, "Rolling Out Berkeley's Green Carpet") but completely avoids the ashray from Pacific Steel Casting's (PSC) decade of air pollution in West Berkeley—and he now sits in judgment of PSC as a member of the Bay Area Air Management District Board who just sued the company. What

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will Bates do to re-Green the citizens in the three-city dead zone that has been toxified by PSC's crud? Beware wolves in Jolly Green Giant suits.

The city is assisting Berkeley businesses to get Green. There are nearly 100 Berkeley Sustainable Businesses which market environmental products or services in sectors such as recycling, energy efficiency, green building and design, manufacturing, and environmental consulting. In addition, there are more than 50 companies which maintain eco-efficient operations in sectors such as restaurants, auto repair, printing, consumer products and light industrial manufacturing. I did join this group recently.

There are a plethora of institutions and groupies promoting the new shift. At the Rocky Mt. Institute in Boulder, Lovins and gang are serving up Natural Capitalism—a new business model that synergizes four major elements:

1. Radically increase the productivity of resource use. Get more from less!
2. Find nature-based production processes with closed loops, no waste, and no toxicity.
3. Shift the business model away from the making and selling of "things" to providing the service that the "thing" delivers.
4. Reinvest in natural and human capital. ([www.rmi.org/sitepages/pid564.php](http://www.rmi.org/sitepages/pid564.php))

The pending 2006 San Francisco Green Festival (<http://greenfestivals.org>) is gonna preach and reach: "green means safe, healthy communities and strong, local economies. Green is the color of hope, of social and economic justice, of ecological balance. Join us for these huge parties with a purpose. You'll enjoy more than 200 visionary speakers and 400 green businesses in each city, great how-to workshops, green films, yoga and movement classes, green careers sessions, organic beer and wine, delicious organic cuisine and live music." Yum!

Have you heard that Burning Man has spawned Cooling Man (an attempt to use pollution credits to offset the smoke and electricity use at the party)?

Grist Magazine, a popular green speak, is targeting the relationship between environmentalism and minority community issues. "Minority communities, now comprising 55 percent of California's population, bear the burden of dumping by dirty industries, and will benefit most from cleaner waste management and recycling approaches. Likewise, since minority communities pay the largest percentage of their incomes for energy (both at home and in their automobiles), they will benefit most from the development of alternative energy sources. And minority communities would benefit most from the construction of affordable housing using green

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building materials and practices." (<http://gristmill.grist.org/story/2006/8/25/15931/5148>)

In the East Bay, the Sustainable Business Alliance is a green group committed to greater sustainability in their business policies and practices. (<http://sustainablebiz.org>)

Looking for training? Certification? Check-out the Leadership Institute for Ecology and the Economy Santa Rosa ([www.ecoleader.org/index.html](http://www.ecoleader.org/index.html)). Or contact the Bay Area Green Business Program to get your certification started ([www.greenbiz.ca.gov](http://www.greenbiz.ca.gov)).

The American Dream is dead. Can we build a new global Green?

- Green is pushing a push mower.
- Green is teaching sustainable values to our parents and employers.
- Green is in the streets, fighting for clean air and historic landmarks.
- Green is watering the free trees that the City put on your curb strip.
- Green is taking your bike to the store and handing out flyers in support of Proposition 87.
- Green your Self; green your home office, kitchen and yard.

This is where Green begins.

Willi Paul is Berkeley activist.

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