

GreenGram

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CUMBERLAND COUNTY GREEN PARTY THE RICHARD J. RAIMONDE/LESTER R. BROWN BRANCH

by Gregory L. Lane

At the CuCGP's Reorganization meeting held on March 24, Gregory L. Lane was elected to a full term as County Chair (he succeeded Rich Raimonde in that office in November 2004), Rich Raimonde was elected recording secretary and Helen Kalla returns as Treasurer. We discussed mechanics for our upcoming fundraisers and approved funding for the first one. Group pictures were passed around. (This picture appears was taken by member Art Dickson at our March 3 meeting.)



First Row: (From Left) Ed Kalla, Rich Raimonde (Recording Secretary), Ken McGill (Cumberland County Coordinator), Ernest McCoy, (Second Row) Nancy Harges, Helen Kalla (Treasurer), Gregory L. Lane (Seated, County Chair)



We adopted a new logo at an online meeting in January, which contains our name, slogan and an insignia. This insignia is still a sunflower motif but is more aggressive-looking, symbolizing a new aggressive attitude in our local and its leadership.

Essex County Report

by Ted Glick

The Green Party of Essex County participated with several other groups in a peace demonstration in Montclair on March 19th. Special "No War! Green Party" signs were done up and were visible throughout the crowd of 200 as we marched and rallied.

Two action subcommittees are making progress. One is planning a series of programs on how people can be more green in the way they live their lives, in their homes and otherwise. This is a direct follow-up from our successful global warming forum in February. The other subcommittee is working with the People's Organization for Progress, N.J. Peace Action and Bill Kane, head of the N.J. Industrial Union Council, to organize a forum tentatively scheduled

—Essex County continued

for June 4th at Rutgers U./Newark on the subject, “Free and Fair Elections: How Can We Get Them?”

And our vice-chair, Cedric Hunter, is actively exploring a possible campaign for Essex County Freeholder.

Gary Novosielski re-elected

Gary Novosielski (Bergen County) has won his third term on the Board of Education of Rutherford, NJ. A field of five candidates appeared on the ballot to fill three seats, and Gary finished second. The GreenGram congratulates Gary and wishes him the best in his next term.

Collapse How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed

By Jared Diamond
Viking, 2005

Collapse is a sprawling overview of past and current societies that have collapsed, are collapsing, or have succeeded based on five sets of factors: environmental damage, climate change, hostile neighbors, friendly trade partners, and a society's responses to its environmental problems. Each set of factors had/has varying importance in each of the historical and contemporary societies Diamond examines, but the “fifth set – the society's responses to its environmental problems – always proves significant.”

Diamond's ideas are big, the points he makes are dramatic and complex, and he presents them all with uncommon clarity. The hazard in reading *Collapse* is to succumb to reading it too fast.

The NYTimes Book Review printed a review (Jan. 30) by Gregg Easterbrook, an editor of The New Republic and a fellow of the Brookings Institution, but even he could find little fault with Diamond's facts or point of view. Easterbrook concluded his review by writing: “Above us in the Milky Way are essentially infinite resources and living space.” !!!!! Easterbrook should get out more.

Green Council Corner

The Green Council is the political coordinating committee of the GPNJ between conventions. It consists of Executive Committee members plus a Coordinator from each affiliated county organization. In addition to its planning and coordination duties, it must frequently respond to political issues in the state by putting the party's stance on record. Two recent resolutions, passed in the February and March meetings, are:

— The Green Party opposes the so-called “Fast Track” bill passed by the Legislature last year and calls for its repeal. The Fast Track is a bill which allows a commission - appointed by the Governor, as usual - to bypass local land use regulations and force the acceptance of real estate development projects.

— The Green Party opposes and wishes to call attention to the Small Business Administration's redefinition of “small business” to those having as much as \$20 million/year in revenues. This definition is the one that is used to give small businesses a portion of contracts in some government programs. This redefinition is part and parcel of the wholesale sell-out of the Republican party to the large corporations that sponsor them.



Collapse

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At times while reading *Collapse* I experienced pessimism — Diamond paints a pretty dismal picture of where we are headed if we don't start making some hard choices about the way we live.^o

The bottom line, though, is that Diamond advocates what we, as Greens, stand for - not just environmentally, but in many areas. As a self-described “cautious optimist”, he maintains that essential changes can be made if the POLITICAL WILL emerges.^o As it stands now, only the Green Party is advocating for the needed changes and for the political will to implement them.

As of this writing (March 22, 2005) the book has been on the NYTimes best seller list for ten weeks. Wide reading of Diamond's compelling argument could result in much new interest in the Green Party.

Author information from the book jacket: “Jared Diamond is a professor of geography at the University of California, LA. He began his scientific career in physiology and expanded into evolutionary biology and biogeography. He has been elected to the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society. ... His most recent book, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.”

GPNJ Holds Ninth Annual Convention

The clock was striking 935am on April 23 when acting Chair Earl Grey called to order the Ninth Annual Convention of the Green Party of New Jersey. By that time about 40 people were in place; this increased to around 60 later, fluctuating as participants came and went.

In his opening remarks, Earl cited organizational improvements that the Executive Committee (“EC”) and Green Council (“GC”) had made in tough circumstances during the previous year. These include regular agendas, formal budget, and running action item lists which are reviewed at each meeting. The budget also has a “nice-to-have” column so that members can know the probable results of increased fundraising. The Membership Committee has re-organized with “area coordinators” in charge of a variety of tasks. The EC hopes to get ad hoc “Legal and Bylaws” and “Campaign and Platform” committees going in the next year, and Earl appealed to members to join these and other state committees.

—Continued on page 5

Why Affiliate with the Green Party?

1. Greens **don't accept money from corporations** and limit the amount individuals can give. Individual citizen support is the foundation of GPNJ.

2. If you agree with what we are trying to do, then changing your party affiliation is more important than voting. It's a paradigm switch. When you vote, your vote disappears right after the election. Party affiliation is lasting and cumulative.

3. As more voters register with the Green Party, we and the issues we raise will be taken more seriously by the media and other political parties. The state board of elections puts out a report each year of how many are registered with each party for all to see. It's like a continuous vote or snapshot of public opinion. Party affiliation is the closest thing we have to proportional representation in the United States.

4. As a practical matter, this can give Green Party activists lists of people who can help get us on the ballot by signing candidate petitions.

5. Another practical matter: As the number of registered Greens grow, it should become easier to recruit candidates.

To get directions on affiliating with the GPNJ, visit our web site at www.GPNJ.org and click on "Register as a Green".

From Cumberland County, Rich Raimonde sends us a letter that was originally published December 30, 2004 in the Daily Journal, Vineland NJ

Thursday, December 30, 2004

Speedway opponent contends track won't create good jobs

By Rich Raimonde

I would like to respond to the letter "Doomsayers wrong about raceway resort," (The Daily Journal, Dec. 18) by James R. Boughter of Millville.

I am in no way, shape or form a "doomsayer." I have been working for a number of years for better ways to get things done by providing real choices at the ballot box and, just as importantly, in the ways we think of and go about solving problems.

The letter writer says the Thunderbolt track will create many jobs both full and part time. This is true. However, the only jobs of any significant number that will pay a living wage will be construction trade jobs, which will disappear when the track is completed. And then we will be left with jobs that neither pay a living wage nor have a benefits package.

Unfortunately, this will only add to the abundance of jobs that are not what most people would classify as "gainful employment." The writer also contends that "many people want part-time jobs." Absolutely true, but the reason for that is because we have so few worthy full-time jobs in our local economy. We are a "service economy" here, and the speedway's proponents have not been forthcoming about the jobs that will be created within the track complex. How can they be anything other than "seasonal" when the complex will only operate 10 months a year? A 32- to 40-hour-a-week job is considered full time, but 10 months is eight weeks shy of a full year. The proponents have also told half-truths about the six promised major "events" of the season in that they did not explain that a single event could stretch into a very long weekend. Therefore, six days could become 18 days.

Anyone who is familiar with the region knows that it is pitifully lacking in infrastructure to handle the kind of

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traffic that would bring 25,000 spectators. That's why the folks on Porreca Drive and elsewhere are rightfully concerned, and also why the promised feasibility study was never initiated.

In conclusion, the writer stated that the "Green Party appears to be against any development in Cumberland County, and that we use "every opportunity to maintain the status quo — no new job development in an area that badly needs it."

Mr. Boughter, it may appear that way to you, but that is not the case and I challenge you to prove otherwise. Our opposition to the speedway has been strong and steadfast from the very beginning. As a political party, we have tried to offer an alternative to the "business as usual" status quo, which has Cumberland County topping every negative list in the state.

We are for smart growth, in that we believe planning should not be an elitist process in which people are told what's best for them, rather than letting the people who will be living with the results shape the outcome.

The speedway has been the lone development we have publicly opposed as a county political party. That's a matter of record.

The Green Party stands for economic common sense and a sustainable future. And speaking of a sustainable future, as a parent I make sure my boys "hit the books," because when they graduate I don't want them to flip burgers, change beds or clean up after rich folks at the speedway 10 months a year.

Rich Raimonde is a Millville resident and a founding member of the Cumberland County Green Party

GPNJ Holds Ninth Annual Convention

—Continued from page 3

There were several speakers at the Convention – please see the separate article on this.

Congratulations to our new officers: Earl Grey, Chair; Jane Hunter, Vice Chair; George DeCarlo, Vice Chair Diversity; Pat Alessandrini, Secretary; Liz Arnone, Treasurer.




The Convention also elected members to national committees. These are simply too numerous to list in this venue, but will be posted to the web site in the near future.

Thirteen counties gave reports, as did the Campus Greens of Rutgers. One of the most often cited issue domains that counties are working on is Sprawl and Eminent Domain abuses, with a few targeting the Fast Track bill specifically. (GPNJ is on record calling for the repeal of Fast Track.) Also on many counties' agendas is peace work and outreach to groups resisting the war against Iraq.

A change to the bylaws was passed: this will enact a concrete method for filling vacancies in the Executive Committee. The Convention also passed a resolution in support of the Tent City protest against tuition increases at Rutgers University.

Matt Thieke of Burlington County offered his services to the party as a gubernatorial candidate to extend our outreach to areas of the state where we have no other candidates. Matt will require 800 signatures to get on the ballot; interested readers are encouraged to contact their county coordinator or the state party for more information.

The day ended with a discussion of long-range electoral strategy which is currently being built by the GC. Ted Glick summarized this for the Convention as

-  organizing at the local level;
-  lawsuit against the 10% rule (in New Jersey, parties can attain ballot status only by receiving 10% of the total vote in a state Assembly election – one of the most restrictive such rules in the U.S.);
-  working on issues with large groups (non-governmental organizations, or "NGO"s)

The food was particularly good this year. We all thank each other for that, and thanks in particular to activists who brought coffee urns, eating utensils and other cumbersome accoutrements. Hope to see you next year!

Speakers are a Highlight at the Convention

Stewart Kautsch, editor

One of the near-term goals of the GPNJ is to establish a Speakers' Bureau – a listing of speakers available to other organizations. Toward that end, our Convention speakers this year were five of our own.

First, our Treasurer Liz Arnone of Ocean County (who was later re-elected), gave a combination Treasurer's Report / Vision Statement. Her handouts included the current GPNJ budget, as well as income and expense tracking from the past 15 months. The budget includes a “nice-to-have” version containing items not currently funded but which the Executive Committee feels would move the Party forward. Liz then analyzed how many Sustainers we would require in order to fund this hypothetical budget: 150 at \$20/month. She encouraged all in attendance to become one of these 150 and the GreenGram passes this encouragement to you, the reader.

George DeCarlo of Union County is a co-founder of the New Jersey Lavender Greens, and was elected at this Convention to the position of Vice-Chair Diversity. He delivered an address on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (“LGBT”) issues with handouts.

George's main point was contrasting “equal rights”, which is usually issue-by-issue, with “full and complete rights” (all-inclusive), which is the demand and goal of the Lavender Greens.

A good example of the incomplete nature of civil rights for LGBT is the notion of “legal aloneness”. When (heterosexual) married couples pass through Customs, for instance, they have the right to go through *together*, for the sake of mutual assistance. But LGBT couples do not have this right. They are *legally alone* during this process, and during *many* processes right up until death.

As another example of the special (and especially derogatory) attitude toward LGBT, George pointed to the term *homophobic*. The same prejudicial attitude with regard to other groups is an “ism”, such as racism, sexism, etc.

“Shedding new light” is an overused term, but I felt that George's talk did just that. He was able to use 15 minutes to impart new concepts and understanding to his listeners – a rare gift in a politician these days! - and it is to be hoped that he can give this talk repeatedly.

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Earl Grey, a long-time Green, has been our Vice Chair this past year as well as the Chair of the Policy Committee. His performance as acting Chair the last few months was rewarded by the membership with an election as state GPNJ Chair. Fortunately, we were also treated to his newest presentation “The Green Edge”.

Earl’s handouts outlined a long-term plan for GP growth in NJ. The “Green Edge” is the GPNJ’s realization that issue-by-issue bandaids will not solve our problems; they come too slowly, are too easy to water down, and are far too easy to roll back when the voters’ attention is distracted. Instead, we offer the public long-term solutions to long-term problems. Since the party is currently turning its attention to local politics, Earl concentrated on the part of his vision/plan that pertains to community politics.

There are four major problem arenas that must be addressed by Greens:



Listening to speaker. Photograph by Nick Mellis.

sprawl, pollution, wrong-headed economics, and privatization of the Commons.

The first, most important step to solve Sprawl is to eliminate secret politics. All local government bodies must be as open to citizen scrutiny as possible. [Editor’s note: In Rutherford, where I have recently run for Borough Council, one of our headlines is to televise the *work sessions* of the Council. The major parties are not happy with this demand!]

Pollution: Earl leaves solutions to this as “homework” for local Greens. Don’t worry, Earl, we’re doing our homework!

Wrong-headed economics – one of the core arenas for Greens: We have to encourage local self-sufficiency, import substitutions, anchor corporations, and property-tax reductions via the mechanism of merging some of the smaller municipalities. He mentions a book called *Going Local* by Michael H. Shuman. [Editor’s note: the latter will explain the concept of “anchor corporations” especially.]

Privatization of the Commons: Again, we must open government and fight the abuse of eminent domain. He recommends members read *Silent Theft* by David Bayer.

In summary, if voters see that our local parties and candidates have superior solutions for local problems, we should succeed in destroying the monopoly held by the major parties.

Jane Hunter has been serving as our Vice Chair, Diversity, and in that role delivered an address on Women’s Issues. (Jane was later elected to the seat of Vice Chair). The talk could be entitled

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“Economic Issues are Women’s Issues”, though I did not catch the official title.

20% of women have no health insurance. Medicaid is under attack. Costs of health coverage for small businesses are prohibitive, and women make up a disproportionate percentage of people working in small business. Affordable child care is extortionately priced. These are the women’s issues that other parties are not even discussing.

Living wage is important. A disproportionate number of women work in sub-minimum wage jobs “with tip income”. (Please note the quotes!)

Title 9 is under attack. This is important for many reasons – here’s one: Self-esteem-building activities – not just sports – are the best defense against domestic abuse.

Women’s businesses are also getting short shrift from the major parties: 30% of small businesses are owned by women, but only 5% of small business government contractors are women-owned. The current Republican regime has been “studying” this problem for years and, of course, getting nowhere.

Greens must champion these issues and do so loudly. This will give us the broadest-based platform for women’s issues among all parties.

Mike Skelley is a long-time Green who, in the past, has served as a Vice Chair. Mike works in the energy industry and gave today’s talk on the environment, which could be titled “Best of Times, Worst of Times.” Pointing to the Highland Water protection as a “best of times” and the Fast Track bill as a “worst of times” example, Mike focused on NJ environmental needs, particularly many which do not receive enough attention.

There are proposals in the NJ government to make a “20% renewable” goal (for electricity) by 2020. The too-often-overlooked factor in a proposal like this is that the power in question would be locally produced; the money would stay in the state’s economy.

The Oyster Creek nuclear power plant is due for re-licensing. Mike pointed out that the plant’s design (one of the oldest in the country) was abandoned by the industry for safety reasons soon after it was commissioned. What NJ citizens need is a *closure* plan for Oyster Creek that phases the lost jobs into others in the renewable energy industry.

In discussions about NJ traffic and pollution, a factor which is frequently overlooked is that much of the truck traffic is not from or to points in NJ but rather is moving through the state for points in New England or south to points in the Mid-Atlantic. We have under-utilized rail beds in the state and a revival of freight rail traffic in NJ could decrease the volume of diesel trucks on the road, boosting our quality of life and the quality of our air. With asthma rates mushrooming, this is no small matter. [Editor’s note: with traffic jams eating so much of our diesel and gasoline, this is also no small matter to our state’s economy.]

His talk was followed by so many questions from the audience it delayed the agenda! Hopefully the short time was enough to at least point the audience members in a good direction for information on NJ environment.

In the view of this writer, all of the speakers performed well. More importantly, they each discussed issues and points of view that get little press, and the audience came away from each presentation knowing more than they did before. Higher praise than that is difficult to give to any speaker.

Let us now tackle the problem of giving them an audience of 8,000,000 New Jerseyans.

About the GreenGram The GreenGram is circulated bimonthly in an effort to keep all GPNJ members informed about recent matters and upcoming events. Members are encouraged to provide brief submissions of news items or opinions, as well as event announcements. Deadline for the July issue will be June 20. Stu Kautsch is the editor, Sally Gellert of SageEditorial Services is the designer. Please submit material to skautsch@mindspring.com.