

Plan G

By Steve Welzer

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We seem to be hearing a lot lately about Plans A, B, and C.

Pat Murphy, executive director of the organization Community Solutions, came out with an interesting book last year titled *Plan C: Community Survival Strategies for Peak Oil and Climate Change* (New Society Publishers, May 2008). He makes the case that, while Plan A (continuing to use fossil fuels) is untenable, Plan B (simply switching to renewable energy sources) is not enough to move in the direction of a sustainable, equitable world. Only by changing our policies and behaviors in the interrelated areas of commerce, food, health, transportation, and the built environment -- in addition to energy -- can we achieve the needed localization, conservation, and reduced impact on the planet (Plan C) necessary to survive.

In February newly-elected President Barack Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This legislation is a second effort on the part of the government -- Plan B -- to ameliorate the economic crisis, following the implementation last October of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008. Already there is speculation that even the combination of the two won't be enough to turn the tide and so Washington's economic brain trust is busy concocting another, probably expanded, initiative ... "Plan C of 2010"?

The election of Barack Obama might be viewed as something of a Plan B itself. Americans finally seemed to have recognized that the jingoist neoconservatism of the Reagan/Bush regimes had little substance outside of tax cuts and militarism. Obama's neoliberalism, though vague and equivocal, nonetheless struck voters, especially the young, as fresh and hopeful.

The hope will be unrequited because this Plan B, while somewhat of an improvement, is nonetheless still regrettably short on substance. Our politics have swung back and forth between conservatism and liberalism for a whole era, yet (amid strident debates about details) the *fundamental* problems of our society -- corporate dominance, environmental degradation, deficient healthcare coverage, disparities of wealth and income, a regressive tax structure, misguided energy and transportation priorities, an ever-expanding military budget, an exclusionary electoral system -- remain unaddressed or unresolved.

It's during times of crisis that political consciousness can change rapidly: break out of old ruts, consider new alternatives, leap forward beyond all expectations. A case can be made that we've now entered such a period. If so, Greens may very well -- finally! -- get a hearing when we advocate in favor of a radical re-direction of social priorities and a wholly new politics guided by ecological wisdom.

Call it Plan G.