

# Timeline

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## **Special Feature: Cultivating the Future**

When we think of the environment, farms are normally not the first things that come to mind. Yet farms account for 50 percent of the land in the contiguous United States, and private forests account for another 20 percent. So how farmers use and preserve that land has an enormous impact on many critical issues, including pollution, pesticides, soil erosion, wildlife habitat, endangered species, use of precious fossil fuels, and food security. Equally important are cultural issues, such as the values surrounding family farms, and our spiritual need as humans to maintain a bond with the earth.

Four articles in this issue relate to this subject: two tell of one young man who has chosen sustainable agriculture as his life work, and the struggle that entails; a third notes the significance of the federal Farm Bill; and the fourth—a story from West Africa—shows that we can learn a thing or two from peasant farmers. The articles remind us of how vital agriculture is to sustainability, and how our choice of food, including growing some of our own, can make a difference.

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## **The Farm as the Keystone of Sustainability**

### **An Interview with Michael Dimock**

“I see agriculture as being one place where human beings are in the most fundamental relationship to the earth because it is farmers who are bringing forth life on a daily basis. So it’s particularly sad to see that agriculture as practiced in this country is in deep trouble.

“Like any human activity, the agriculture system today is based on a set of values and principles. Until recently, the primary principles structuring the food system were money-based; that is, people were most interested in maximum return on investment and minimum cost of food at the point of purchase.

“What this has done is externalized many of the costs associated with the production of food. In the price of food you’re not capturing the cost of environmental damage or the damage to people’s health. Low cost at the point of purchase means that chemicals have to be used in order to create cheap food. We all know that using too many chemicals degrades the land and degrades our health. Also not included is the cost of the loss of equity to farmers: food prices today are so low that very few young people are willing to farm anymore. The average age of a farmer in the United States is around 60 which means that, at the rate it’s going now, in ten years our family farms will be basically out of business.

“As a result, in the U.S. today we are already rapidly losing our food production base—particularly in the coastal zones, west and east, where land values are very high because of urbanization. Many farms in the U.S. are being lost and are ending up in Latin America, in Asia, in Africa, in the parts of Europe where land is still cheap. These areas are becoming the food production zones of the world, because they can export food at very low cost. As a result, we in the U. S. face becoming dependent on other countries for our food supply, much as we are heavily dependent on other nations for our energy supply. To me, that’s dangerous.

“In addition, when we export the production of our food it’s too often to places where we have less control over how that food is created, places where there are fewer resources to deal with the issues of quality, the use of chemicals, and sustainable agriculture. I think it’s important that we as a nation stay close to our food supply, to keep our mind focused on sustainability and to insure that what we eat is healthy.

“The way we in the U.S. have thought about food production—maximum return on investment with minimum cost of food at the point of purchase—seems on the surface to be a wonderful set of principles or guiding values, values that go far back into our past. I believe that today we need a broader set of values. They would include what farmers are doing as stewards of the land. Are they being compensated—as they should be—for their work to keep the land sustainable and healthy? Are we as citizens willing to pay a little more for food so that farmers don’t need to use so many chemicals? There are indications that a large part of the population is willing to pay more for food, but we still need more people to go in that direction.

“The Europeans have a different set of values that drive their food system. A Congressman from Texas, who sits on the Agriculture Committee, shared with me that the president of France stood up at a meeting related to AG Policy and the World Trade Organization and said that the Americans had to accept that Europeans were not about to change their position on agricultural trade policy. According to the French leader, European policy stems from the fact that Europeans love what the farmers provide: high quality food and stewardship of the countryside. And therefore, Europe was not willing to sacrifice their farmers through free-trade agreements that would essentially export the rest of their production to third-world countries.

“We have to make a similar decision in the United States. We have to ask what our farmers are doing for the environment, and what they are doing to create food that’s healthy. If we can include those values in the formula for structuring our food system, then I think there’s a lot of hope. I haven’t met a farmer yet who wants to damage the environment. But farmers are trapped between a rock and hard place. They have to produce food at a price that can get them into the marketplace.”

## ORGANIC AND BIOLOGICALLY INTEGRATED FARMING

“Fifty or more years ago, farmers through-out the United States and the world were basically farming organically. In the post-war years, however, with the development and understanding of chemistry, agriculture changed completely. Chemistry became the basis for production systems which provided cheap food to the public and high profits to the farmers.

“Well, what’s happened over time is that we’ve begun to recognize the impacts of externalized costs. So about 20 years ago a small group—revolutionaries in one sense—began to move back toward organic systems. And in the last 10 years, another form of agriculture has emerged—not quite organic, but not conventional either—called biologically integrated farming, which is really a combination of the best of organic and conventional farming. This method allows silver bullets, in the form of pesticides, that farmers can use only when they need them—like taking penicillin when you have pneumonia. If chemicals have a place in the food system, that’s where the use should be, not the way pesticides are used today.

“I would say that in the next few years you’re going to see an incredible explosion of biologically integrated farming systems. In Europe, where farmers are paid subsidies to go into organic, you’ve only got 10 percent farming organically, but biologically integrated farming systems have attracted 70 percent of the growers. In the U.S. you’ll see the 2 percent of farmers in organic move to 10 percent, and then probably in 20 years everyone will be farming closer and closer to organic as our understanding of chemistry and biology increases. Biologically integrated farming systems and organic systems would then be the mainstay of all food production. That is the most hopeful thing I can imagine. Then we will see that by nurturing life through the food system and through other systems, we can build a sustainable future and continue to grow in consciousness as we learn from all the systems, and not degrade the earth.

“So the big hope is that consumers will be willing to pay what it takes to produce food that does not harm the environment and allows a farmer to make a living so that his or her offspring want to continue in that tradition. People from outside of agriculture want to get into agriculture because it looks like an exciting place to be because of its relationship to the earth and biology.

“Another hope is that consumers would have a clearer view of where their food comes from. And a large segment of consumers would be dedicated to trying to purchase what’s local. Agriculture is a sector of the economy, and if you can keep it alive in your region, you’ve diversified your economy, and we know that diversity is one of the primary engines for sustainability in the long term.

“I also think there should be trade between countries, so we can celebrate their cultures, because food is a reflection of culture. But it’s incredibly important that the proportions be at a level at which all nations of the world are producing abundant food supplies, because we never know what may happen that would disrupt those supplies.”

Michael Dimock is an agriculture consultant and CEO of Ag Innovations Network.

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## **A Young Environmentalist Pursues His Dream**

Michael Dimock grew up in the San Francisco Bay area and studied international relations in college, earning a Master’s Degree. He worked for two years as Director of European Marketing for an international agribusiness company whose largest client was the McDonald’s Corporation. In that job he became interested in the growing movement toward sustainable agriculture in Europe. Finding, however, that his company did not share his interest, he quit and moved to Sonoma County, California, north of San Francisco.

“I had a little bit of money from the period I had been working in Europe, so I spent nine months reading and thinking about what it was I wanted to do. The most important thing to me was to live in a place where I felt connected. I had an interest in sustainability and in agriculture, and I realized that I was in the middle of one of the most interesting, innovative places on the planet in terms of agriculture, marketing, and the environment. So it seemed this would be a perfect place for me to be involved.

“I’ve always loved nature. On my father’s side of the family there’s a large cattle ranch of about 14,000 acres. I spent a lot of time there as a kid and fell in love with nature and man’s relationship to it. I see agriculture as one of the places that human beings are most fundamentally in relationship to the earth, but I could also see that agriculture as practiced in this country had some serious problems.”

With this in mind, Michael in 1990 started the nonprofit company Ag Innovations Network, with the mission of sustaining and enhancing agriculture. “Our focus was on developing regional marketing campaigns so that consumers can look on a store shelf and identify a local farm product. It doesn’t have to be fresh produce—it could also be something like a jam made from local produce which had gone through some sort of processing. These are called ‘shelf talkers.’ For example, we have a program called ‘Select Sonoma County,’ with two labels, ‘Sonoma Made’ and ‘Sonoma Grown,’ and when someone goes into a store, they can see those labels and support the local farm economy.

“Today, we do an increasing amount of mediation work between farmers and environmentalists where the two are in conflict around urban centers. We’re also

involved in two counties in the state of California in negotiating the development of resource protection ordinances. Our team comes in and takes people through a planning, visioning, and conflict resolution process. In the end it renders a solution, a resource protection program that empowers the farmers to do better jobs farming sustainably but doesn't harm them by imposing really strict regulations. They get some wiggle room to respond to the environment, but at the same time meet the environmental goals and the community's goals of having a safe, sustainable system."

Dimock says it wasn't easy jumping into a new and unknown field. "When I made the decision, I remember going through a period of fear. I had been working in a corporate environment, which paid well and offered security, and I could see a growth path to wealth and an exciting life. But I felt that this new venture would be a fertile ground for me to take a leap of faith and try to build this vision of a business serving communities around the idea of sustaining agriculture. It was a leap of faith because there were no examples of it. The first year I made very little money, and over a three-year period I went deeply in debt. To finance the business, I used credit cards for the first two years because I knew that no banks were going to lend me money to do what I was doing.

"It was difficult, but I couldn't see doing anything else where I would feel satisfied, fulfilled as person. Because I didn't have a wife or children dependent on me, I wasn't going to impact anyone but myself. So I made that decision and it's gone better than I expected, but it's been a lot harder than I envisioned, too.

"Working with communities on agricultural issues is a niche business. Only 2 percent of the population is involved in agriculture, so my client base is not that large. That forces me to travel a lot. That's difficult for me as a person. Also, as the founder of this nonprofit organization, there is a load of work involved in trying to build a business while you're also trying to serve these communities. So I am incredibly busy. My biggest enemies are exhaustion and sometimes a sense of burnout. It's a tough life in one way, but it's what I feel like I was meant to do.

"Despite the events of September 11, 2001, I still have hope for the world. I do believe there are many things pertaining particularly to the food system that are hopeful. One is that the fastest growing segment of the food industry is the natural food segment. That's a good sign.

"The second is that right now in Congress there is a huge debate going on over the future of the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) farm bill. Some in Congress understand that we need to see our farmers as stewards, and they are creating systems that will allow farmers to be paid to be stewards, rather than as wheat producers or pork producers, or whatever. The subsidies will go away, and stewardship payments will replace them. That's what Europe has done, and that is what has allowed them to create a much more sustainable food system than we have in the United States.

“Another source of hope is the number of committed people here [in northern California] who understand that food is the basis for sustainability. If you have a food system in place around a large urban center, all the waste water created by that urban center can be given back to farmers after it’s treated, and used to grow food. All the green waste from people’s yards can be composted and returned back to the farmers. If the cities would be willing to invest in marketing systems that highlight local production, you could have an integration between the local farmers and the urban population. And if you have that system in place, you have a diverse economy, you have healthy food, you have people who understand biology, you have kids going onto farms for their labs. There’s a lot of hope in that. So I’m quite excited about the future.”

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## **Extraction or Stewardship: The Farm Bill**

**By Walt Hays**

In his interview, Michael Dimock talked about the need to switch from a culture focused solely on extracting food from the soil at low cost to the consumer—regardless of externalized costs—to one which rewards farmers for being stewards of the land. He also mentioned the effort to incorporate some of that philosophy in the latest Congressional farm bill.

Starting in the Depression, when farm incomes sank and the food supply appeared in jeopardy, Congress has dealt with agriculture on a comprehensive basis every five years in a Farm Bill that defines and sets funding levels for a wide variety of programs, from commodity supports and trade policy to conservation, research, and education. 2001 was one of those years, and several competing bills were introduced, but since none were passed by both Houses, the debate is continuing.

In 1996, Congress reduced direct aid to farmers to \$7.5 billion, but since then subsidies soared to a record \$32 billion in 2000. In a self-defeating cycle, the subsidies encourage overproduction, which pushes prices lower, which requires more subsidies. The lower prices also drive out of business the small family farms that the law is supposed to help, forcing them to sell out to the large growers who thrive on subsidies. The waste and inequity in the system was brought home in 2001 by a Web site ([www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org)) that made public for the first time every farm subsidy payment received by every farmer since 1996. It shows that 75 percent of subsidies go to the largest corporate farms, of which the wealthiest eight percent now control 72 percent of U.S. agricultural production. The biggest winners, many farmers say, are the huge grain companies that buy inexpensive corn subsidized by the taxpayer and then process and sell it at a profit.

In an effort to shift away from that broken system, Ralph Grossi, President of the American Farmland Trust, addressed Congress on June 6, 2001, on behalf of more than a dozen major environmental organizations. He stated that “the next farm bill should be designed to help farmers provide environmental quality and reward them for doing so.” The farm bill passed in February 2002 by the Senate contains a few moral victories. But, considering the financial clout of big agribusiness, the final bill reconciling the House and Senate versions will likely omit even these small victories, giving us once again a bill that is a far cry from one which will help preserve our nation’s working lands and the environment.

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## Really Organic

### A Report by David Hecht and Georges Badiane

Every day on his farm in Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa, Dass Sangare collects the urine of his seven cows. “It’s not exactly a pleasant job,” he says, sitting in the shade beside his hut surrounded by cotton. “They usually go in the morning just before they’re milked. If you don’t get a bucket under them in time, you miss most of it.”

Sangare then leaves the urine to ferment for a few days, dilutes it with water, and sprays it over his cotton plants. “It’s one of the best insecticides there is,” he says. “It’s also a herbicide and fertilizer, and it’s free.”

Most farmers spray their cotton with chemicals. None have worked. “If they would just spray cow urine once a week,” says Sangare, “their whiteflies would go away.”

More than 5,000 local cotton farmers have stopped using chemicals to protect their crops. “And more want to convert—we just don’t have the support system,” says Mohamedoun Ag Mohamed Abba, an agronomist.

To see a dramatic demonstration of the results of organic methods, farmers just take a short walk down a dirt track. There are two of Abba’s experimental cotton fields next to each other, only one of which is sprayed with cow urine. The plants in one are bright and bushy-green; in the other, they are grey and straggly. It is hard to believe they are the same species.

“Minerals like magnesium, potassium and iron in urine act as fertilizer, while its acidity kills newly-sprouting weeds,” says Abba. But he admits that research is not conclusive on why only the urine repels whiteflies. “It seems a hormone in the cow urine is the active ingredient,” he says. “We’re also finding that the urine of female goats and sheep works—and even the urine of women has similar properties.” Women’s urine has the advantage that it is easier to collect.

The secret of success lies in more than just urine. Potions are made from an unlikely array of raw materials—burnt animal bones, wood ash, chili powder, garlic, and the leaves, roots, and fruits of dozens of local plants. One of the most remarkable is a plant called neem, which is abundant in much of sub-Saharan Africa and is used extensively by African herbalists to treat everything from malaria to dandruff. Recent research in the West has confirmed what traditional healers have known for centuries. The farmers make insect repellent from the leaves and nuts, and fertilizer from the nut shells.

Such techniques were largely replaced in Africa after 1945, when Western chemicals became readily available even to poor peasant farmers. Alternatives were all but forgotten. Now organic cotton growing has begun in Senegal, Benin, Tanzania, Mozambique, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, with plans for Ghana and Mali as well.

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## Twelve Principles of Spiritual Leadership

*The following is adapted from a presentation given by Will Keepin at Schumacher College, Totnes, England, July 17, 1997. Keepin, who has a Ph.D. in physics, is president of the Satyana Institute (formerly Shavano Institute) in Boulder, Colorado, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to integrate spiritual principles and practices into social change leadership. He leads training workshops for Satyana's programs in Leading with Spirit and Gender Reconciliation, and has published over 30 articles. Keepin is on the adjunct faculty of the California Institute of Integral Studies.*

In the course of working with social-change advocates and ecological activists, we have developed a provisional set of “principles of spiritual leadership.” These are neither definitive nor authoritative principles, but rather the beginning of a collective inquiry into how we can apply spiritual teachings in social change work.

**First:** The first principle is that the motivation underlying our activism for social change must be transformed from anger and despair to compassion and love. This is a major challenge for the environmental movement, for example. It is not to deny the legitimacy of noble anger or outrage at injustice of any kind. Rather, we seek to work for love, rather than against evil. We need to adopt compassion and love as our foundational intention, and do whatever inner work is required to implement this intention. Even if our outward actions remain the same, there is a major difference in results if our underlying intention supports love rather than defeating evil. The Dalai Lama says, “A positive future can never emerge from the mind of anger and despair.”

**Second:** The second principle is a classical spiritual tenet, though challenging to practice. It is the principle of nonattachment to outcome. To the extent that we are attached to the results of our work, we rise and fall with our success and failures, which is

a path to burnout. Failures are inevitable, and successes are not the deepest purpose of our work. This requires a deepening of faith in the intrinsic value of our work—beyond the concrete results. To the extent that our actions are rooted in pure intention, they have a reverberation far beyond the concrete results of the actions themselves. As Gandhi emphasized, “the victory is in the doing,” not the outcome.

In our workshops, we have had several environmental leaders react strongly to this principle. As one lawyer put it, “How can I possibly go into court and not be attached to the outcome? You bet I care who wins and who loses! If I am not attached to the outcome, I’ll just get bulldozed!” His words underscore the poignant challenge of implementing these principles in practice. Yet he keeps coming back to our retreats, and he actively seeks ways to love his adversaries. He acknowledged that, although it is difficult to love some of his adversaries, one way he can do it is to love them for creating the opportunity for him to become a strong voice for truth and protection of the natural environment.

**Third:** The third principle is that your integrity is your protection. The idea here is that if your work has integrity, that will tend to protect you from negative circumstances. For example, there are practices for making yourself invisible to the negative energy that comes toward you in adversarial situations. It’s a kind of psychic aikido, where you internally step out of the way of negative energy, and you make yourself energetically transparent so it passes right through you. But this only works if your work is rooted in integrity.

**Fourth:** The fourth principle is related: the need for unified integrity in both means and ends. Integrity in means cultivates integrity in the fruit of one’s work; you cannot achieve a noble goal using ignoble means. Some participants in our workshops engage regularly in political debates, testimony, and hearings. We have them experimenting with consciousness techniques for transmuting challenging energy into compassion and love—right there in the hearing room. Early indications are that this is helpful in defusing charged psychological situations, and reducing tension in heated debates.

**Fifth:** The fifth principle is don’t demonize your adversaries. People respond to arrogance with their own arrogance, which leads to polarization. The ideal is to constantly entertain alternative points of view so that you move from arrogance to inquiry, and you then have no need to demonize your opponents. This is hard to do, as we often feel very certain about what we think we know, and the injustices we see. As John Stuart Mill said, “In all forms of human debate, both parties tend to be correct in what they affirm, and wrong in what they deny.” Going into an adversarial situation, we can be aware of the correctness of what we are affirming, but there is usually a kernel of truth—however small—in what is being affirmed by our opponent. We need to be especially mindful about what we deny, because this is often where our blind spots will be.

**Sixth:** The sixth principle is to love thy enemy. Or if you can't do that, at least have compassion for them. This means moving from an "us-them" consciousness to a "we" consciousness. It means recognizing that I am the logger: when I write these principles of spiritual activism and publish them in this newsletter, I give the command to the logger to fell the trees, to produce the pulp, to produce this paper so that I can publish these spiritual principles about how best to save the trees. It is seeing the full circle of our interconnected complicity, and discovering all the problems of humanity in our own hearts and our own lives. We are not exempt and we are not different. The "them" that we speak of is also us. The practice of loving our adversaries is obviously challenging in situations with people whose views and methodologies are radically opposed to ours, but that is where the real growth occurs.

**Seventh:** The seventh and eighth principles are a bit contradictory. The seventh is that your work is for the world rather than for you. We serve on behalf of others and not for our own satisfaction or benefit. We're sowing seeds for a cherished vision to become a future reality, and our fulfillment comes from the privilege of being able to do this work. This is the traditional understanding of selfless service.

**Eighth:** But then the eighth principle is that selfless service is a myth. Because in truly serving others, we are also served. In giving we receive. This is important to recognize as well, so we don't fall into the trap of pretentious service to others' needs and develop a false sense of selflessness or martyrdom.

**Ninth:** The ninth principle is: do not insulate yourself from the pain of the world. We must allow our hearts to be broken—broken open—by the pain of the world. As that happens, as we let that pain in, we become the vehicles for transformation. If we block the pain, we are actually preventing our own participation in the world's attempt to heal itself. As we allow our hearts to break open, the pain that comes is the medicine by which the Earth heals itself, and we become the agents of that healing. This is a vital principle that is quite alien to our usual Western ways of thinking.

**Tenth:** The tenth principle is: what you attend to, you become. If you constantly attend to battles, you become embattled. On the other hand, if you constantly give love, you become loving. We must choose wisely what we attend to, because it shapes and defines us deeply.

**Eleventh:** The eleventh principle is to rely on faith. This is not some Pollyannaish naiveté, as many "realists" would interpret it. Rather it entails cultivating a deep trust in the unknown, recognizing the presence of "higher" or "divine" forces at work that we can trust completely without knowing their precise agendas or workings. It means invoking something beyond the traditional scientific world view. It implies that there are invisible

forces that we can draw upon and engage, firstly by knowing they are there; secondly, by asking or yearning for them to support us—or more precisely, asking them to allow us to serve on their behalf. Faith is understood not as blind adherence to any set of beliefs, but as a knowing from experience and intuition about intrinsic universal principles beyond our direct observation, and relying upon these principles, whatever they are, to support us in creating what we aspire to create. This actually brings great relief when we realize it really isn't up to us to figure out all the steps to manifest our unfolding vision, because we are participants in a larger cosmic will. Nevertheless, it is our job to discover what our unique gift is—our unique role—and for each person to give their gift as skillfully and generously as possible, while trusting that the rest will all work itself out.

**Twelfth:** Finally, the twelfth principle is that love creates the form. As Stephen Levine says, “The heart crosses the abyss that the mind creates.” It is the mind that gives rise to the apparent fragmentation of the world, while the heart can operate at depths unknown to the mind. So, if we begin imagining with our hearts, and work from a place of yearning as well as thinking, then we develop an unprecedented effectiveness that is beyond our normal ways of understanding because it doesn't have to do with thinking. When we bring the fullness of our humanity to our leadership, we can be far more effective in creating the future we want.

In closing, as we enter the third millennium, we are urgently called to action in two distinct capacities: to serve as hospice workers to a dying culture, and to serve as midwives to an emerging culture. These two tasks are required simultaneously; they call upon us to move through the world with an open heart—meaning we are present for the grief and the pain—as we experiment with new visions and forms for the future. Both are needed. The key is to root our actions in both intelligence and compassion—a balance of head and heart that combines the finest human qualities in our leadership for cultural transformation.

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## **An Obligation to Question Prevailing Wisdom**

**By Joel Beinin**

What does it take to be branded by a conservative think tank as “the weak link” in America's response to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11? Not much.

I was so designated in a report called “Defending Civilization” put out by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, an organization co-founded by Lynne Cheney, wife of the vice-president. The Council's ire was aroused by a comment I made to a reporter from the *San Jose Mercury News*, “If Osama bin Laden is confirmed to be behind the attacks,” I said, “the United States should bring him before an international tribunal on charges of crimes against humanity.”

I was one of 40 university faculty members the Council identified as negligent in “defending civilization.” The Council offered 116 other quotations from both students and faculty members as proof of its charge that “our universities are failing America.” The Council alleges that American universities have been brought to this sorry state by inadequate teaching of Western culture and American history.

Consequently, students and faculty do not understand what is at stake in the fight against terrorism and are undermining the “defense” of civilization by asking too many questions.

In addition to my words, other comments included in the Council’s list of unacceptable speech include, “Ignorance breeds hate” and “There needs to be an understanding of why this kind of suicidal violence could be undertaken against our country.” In suggesting that such statements are incompatible with true civilization, the Council reveals both an impoverished and an undemocratic vision of our political and cultural heritage and a profound misunderstanding of the role of universities in a free society.

I know of no faculty members at my own university or any other who believe that the Western cultural tradition and American history ought not to be taught. The only questions that have ever been debated seriously are how those subjects should be taught and the extent to which other cultural traditions should also be taught. This is a healthy discussion. It continues the practices of self-critical reflection and constant revision of the core syllabus of higher education that have long been a part of the Western intellectual tradition.

Engaging in debate over public policy and giving serious consideration to unpopular opinions that question the prevailing wisdom—even in times of national crisis—are high forms of civic engagement and patriotism. In a free society universities are among the principal institutions charged with providing forums for such debate. The humanistic disciplines in particular—history, literary studies, and philosophy—are committed to constant examination and reexamination of ideas and values. The Council’s report confirms not that American universities are failing but that, at least in this respect, they are doing their job well.

The Council’s attack on American universities in the name of “defending civilization” is a ruse for its real agenda: suppression of even the slightest form of dissent from the Bush administration’s policy in response to the Sept. 11 attacks. The Council correctly detected that my views differed from those of the Bush administration in that I believe that those accused of even the most heinous crimes should be put on trial, if possible, instead of simply being shot. Similarly, the Council regarded as inherently suspect—and insufficiently supportive of our leaders—the call to understand better why some people in other lands hate America enough to kill themselves to harm Americans.

Vigorous and informed debate is especially needed when our country is perceived to be under attack. In 1964, Congress overwhelmingly adopted the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, which President Johnson used as a justification for committing hundreds of thousands of American troops to Vietnam. Even then it was possible to know that the Johnson administration's claim that American ships had been repeatedly attacked by North Vietnam was false. This incident was used to rationalize an escalation the administration had previously been planning. If more Americans had joined senators Wayne Morse of Oregon and Ernest Gruening of Alaska—the only dissenters from the resolution—in asking tough questions about what happened in the Gulf of Tonkin, the subsequent history of the Vietnam war might have been very different.

The Council's goal has nothing to do with “defending civilization” and everything to do with censorship. By casting aspersions on those who have attempted to engage in a debate over foreign policy and by creating a list of those who do not religiously endorse the line of the Bush administration, the Council reveals an unsavory bent reminiscent of an earlier episode of recent American history.

Our country has been through the trauma of blacklists promoted by the far right before. In the 1950s, Sen. Joseph McCarthy and his followers branded Hollywood actors and writers, trade union leaders, liberal politicians, and university faculty members as un-American communist sympathizers. The McCarthyites succeeded in narrowing the range of American political debate and cultural expression and depriving many innocent people of their careers and livelihoods.

The report of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni would be of limited importance but for the group's powerful supporters. Not only is the vice-president's wife the group's chairperson emerita, former Democratic vice-presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman is a member of its National Council. A lengthy quote by Ms. Cheney appears on the cover of the report, suggesting that she endorses its contents and giving the document the appearance of a quasi-official statement of government policy.

Some members of the Bush administration have actively sought to suppress debate over national policy using tactics similar to those of the National Council of Trustees and Alumni. On Dec. 6 Attorney General John Ashcroft testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee on President Bush's proposal to establish military tribunals to try suspected terrorists who don't have permanent resident status. Mr. Ashcroft asserted that those who criticized the extra-ordinary powers sought by the executive branch “aid terrorists,” “erode our national unity,” and “give ammunition to America's enemies.” The Attorney General's charges suggest—as McCarthy did in the 1950s and as the National Council of Trustees and Alumni did—that dissent is tantamount to treason.

Against such scurrilous accusations those who cherish freedom of speech, open debate, and due process of law must vigorously affirm that these values—not the imperatives of the national security state—are the core of our democratic traditions. “They that give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety,” Benjamin Franklin warned, “deserve neither liberty nor safety.” Those who try to enforce conformity of views in the academy and who condemn critics as traitors have more in common with the Taliban than they do with the founders of our nation.

Joel Beinin is Professor of Middle East History at Stanford University and President of the Middle East Studies Association.

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## **Is Peace Possible**

### **A Personal Perspective by Don Lathrop**

Any reasonable person who looks around at the violence, greed, and insecurity so abundant today could conclude that it is impossible ever to have peace in the world. This is an entirely reasonable conclusion.

There are many examples of other “reasonable conclusions” in our past.

Reasonable people condemned Galileo for showing that the Earth revolves around the sun; and Giordano Bruno for suggesting that there are planetary systems out there other than our own. Reasonable people laughed at Fulton’s steamboat. Reasonable people rejected Picasso’s artwork.

Vast numbers of reasonable Americans saw nothing wrong with human slavery; others believed that women had no business voting.

Reasonable people thought it impossible for Gandhi’s tactics to rid India of British domination. Reasonable people believed such tactics, as used by Martin Luther King, Jr. and his colleagues, would not be able to change the status quo of civil rights in our land.

Reasonable people thought Communist China such a scourge on the planet that we should never trade with them, but Richard Nixon changed all that. Reasonable people thought it would be impossible ever to depose a modern American president, but Nixon was deposed.

Reasonable people would never have predicted that a people's movement could make Lyndon Johnson so uncomfortable in office that he would not run for a second term, but that was the case.

My wife and I were in Berlin in the summer of 1989. It seemed reasonable to us that the massive Berlin Wall was not coming down for a very long time, if ever. It was down within a few months.

During the Cold War, reasonable people could never imagine the dissolution of the Soviet Union, or envision the end of South African apartheid without enormous bloodshed.

Most people don't want to kill others or despoil the environment. Most people appreciate cooperative interactions. Most people want love in their lives and an absence of fear. Most people want to live in peace.

It's long past time for this majority of people to dare to believe that achieving peace is both reasonable and possible. What is needed is the courage to envision this possibility and act accordingly.

May the quest for peace through peaceful activity replace the quest of peace through war. It would be the greatest gift we can give ourselves at the beginning of this new century.

Don Lathrop coordinates Peace and World Order Studies at Berkshire Community College in Pittsfield, Maine.

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**"A Nuclear-Free Future" was the headline in Britain's *New Scientist* reporting on the first comprehensive review of the U.K.'s energy needs in 20 years.**

### **A report by Sandra Mardigian**

The review was ordered by Prime Minister Tony Blair, undertaken by the British cabinet's Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU), and chaired by Brian Wilson, an advocate of nuclear power. Its purpose was to study issues of domestic energy security and pricing, and to assess what would be necessary in order to reduce carbon emissions in keeping with Britain's assumed global responsibility.

The results, announced in December, came as a surprise. The long-awaited study had been widely expected to embrace the nuclear industry's plans for up to 15 new nuclear

plants. Instead, it relegates nuclear power to a full phase-out by 2050 if renewable sources deliver as expected.

Leaked early to London's *Financial Times*, news of the review's conclusions generated a buzz on the BBC and other British and international media readily available in the U.S. on the Internet.

Britain's *New Scientist* magazine's lead editorial provided this summary:

“The specter of catastrophic climate change is forcing nations around the world to question how they make their energy. With carbon dioxide pushing up the global temperature, most governments agree that they must move away from the Victorian technologies of burning coal and oil towards cleaner options. Logically, one solution could be nuclear power because it emits no carbon. [But] that logic is flawed, argues the British government's energy review [which] shows that the cost assumptions of the past were over-optimistic: nuclear power is relatively expensive.”

The PIU review says that nuclear technology has an “uncertain role, since concerns about radioactive waste, accidents, terrorism, and proliferation may limit or preclude its use.” It states that the cost of insuring against accidents and disposing of radioactive waste should be borne by nuclear stations rather than government. This would make nuclear power even more expensive. “Nowhere in the world have new nuclear stations been financed within a liberalized electricity market” the report points out.

Rather than nuclear power, the review says renewable energy is the most flexible way to reduce carbon emissions and recommends producing at least 20 percent of electricity from renewable resources by 2020, compared with the current goal of 10 percent. This would be achieved by massively expanding the number of wind turbines on land and offshore and by introducing wave power and underwater tidal generators. A separate government study published about the same time suggests that Scotland on its own could produce 60 gigawatts of renewable power using these methods. This is equal to three-quarters of Britain's current generating capacity.

Among many recommendations, the PIU report also urges government to encourage the development of combined heat and power, which uses the heat from electricity generation rather than wasting it; and recommends setting a target for a 20 percent improvement in domestic energy efficiency by 2010. It suggests requiring companies to include energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in annual reports. It anticipates carbon taxes on all areas of the economy, including households, by 2010 (provided government measures succeed in substantially reducing the number of people trapped in “fuel poverty.”)

The *New Scientist* editorial concludes: “The PIU review paints a picture of an energy policy that could set an example to the rest of the world. Prime Minister Tony Blair should seize the opportunity with both hands.”

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## **Bioneers: A Conference of Healing and Hope**

### **A Report by Debbie Mytels**

Anyone interested in how to restore Earth systems that are going haywire should plan to attend the annual Bioneers Conference, held each Fall in Northern California.

Bioneers—biological pioneers—don’t just talk about how to create a more socially and environmentally sustainable global society, they focus on practical solutions—solutions that can be replicated around the world. At Bioneers, you hear presentations on everything from farmers’ markets and community-sponsored agriculture to pollution prevention, ecological design, and socially responsible investments.

Over the years, *Timeline* has summarized some of the more interesting talks presented at the conference, such as “Report from the Underground,” in which Paul Stamets extolled the virtue of mushrooms for cleaning up pollution and repairing ecosystems [see *Timeline* July/Aug 2001]. This year, Stamets was back, along with other leading lights in the field such as author Frances Moore Lappé, innovator Hunter Lovins, and Paul Ray, who researches “cultural creatives.”

This year’s conference reflected the impacts of the attacks of Sept. 11. The unspoken theme was “Healing”—healing the planet through ecological restoration, healing our human bodies through holistic medicine, and most of all, healing the wounds to the human spirit which had both caused and were deepened by the terrorist violence.

As the organizers of Bioneers, Kenny Ausubel and Nina Simons, wrote in the conference program, “This year we gather under a cloud. We certainly don’t have easy answers.[but] if there is one thing these recent events have revealed...it is our interdependence. The world is so intricately interwoven that we had best emulate the processes of the natural world: To live and prosper by cooperation, symbiosis, and mutual aid. At this time let us remember that life has astonishing powers of healing and self-repair. When we nourish living systems with life-giving energy, they renew themselves and flourish. At heart, the historic task of restoration is one of healing.”

Even with the conference coming on the heels of Sept. 11, there were sunbursts of light, laughter, and hope. The sold-out attendance of some 3,000 people was one bright factor. To this writer it felt that people had made a special effort to attend, as if to underscore the commitment to our shared kinship with all life. Another positive feeling came from the

visible presence of people in their teens and twenties; special youth workshops drew large numbers of young people, many of whom also volunteered their time to help with conference logistics. Seeing the younger generation there in force gave this baby boomer a sense that the Bioneers movement has the legs it needs to stand the test of time.

While the plenary sessions and workshops are always inspiring and informative, one of the most helpful aspects of Bioneers is the thought-provoking and often witty introductions to the speakers made by Ausubel and Simons. Setting the context for each presentation, these introductions are themselves a major vehicle for communicating the themes of Bioneers.

For example, in her remarks opening the conference, Nina Simons acknowledged the sense of despair felt by many in the auditorium, but coaxed us toward hope by suggesting we “reimagine what it means to be human.” Citing the need for a new Creation Story that would integrate our scientific knowledge with our human desire for purpose and meaning, she invited the conference participants to follow the Walk Through Time exhibit which the Foundation for Global Community had contributed and set up in a mile-long path outside the conference center. Simons encouraged us to remember that each of us has a part in this evolving Universe Story, quoting a Lakota chief who said, “Did you think that the Creator would have made unnecessary people at this time of crisis for the Earth?” Taking lessons from the evolutionary leaps of previous species confronted by ecological challenges, she urged us to ask: “What act of passion and daring will I contribute to the world today?”

In Kenny Ausubel’s opening remarks, he noted that the North Pole ice is melting three times faster than predicted by scientists, calling for us to reject the “fossil fool economy” and to turn off the “weapons of mass distraction” owned by the corporate “oiligarchy.” He praised other countries, such as Germany, which has set a 20-year goal of doubling its economy while using half the current amount of energy, and Japan, which is the world’s largest producer of solar power. In contrast, he said, the U.S. has 103 nuclear power plants, none of which is insured against disasters—nor against terrorist attacks. On the positive side, Ausubel noted the increasing number of U.S. cities using renewable energy (Oakland leads the way, followed by Seattle). Moreover, the “soft technologies” of alternative power generation lend themselves to democratic control by providing options to relying totally on the major power producers.

While the technical solutions to questions about our energy future are still unknown, Ausubel concluded “There is great hope in what we don’t know...and in what little we *do* know.”

The 2002 Bioneers Conference will be held October 18-20. Contact: Collective Heritage Institute toll-free at 1-877-BIONEER; website: [www.bioneers.org](http://www.bioneers.org)

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## Words to Live By

The Earth Charter originated at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Two years ago we printed in *Timeline* the preamble to the Charter, along with the 16 key principles in the Charter itself. The text of the full Charter is available on [www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org). Here we reprint the first paragraph of the preamble as a reminder of our collective responsibility in this post-Sept 11 age

“We stand at a critical moment in Earth’s history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.”

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