

How green is the Green New Deal?

[By Don Fitz, published in *Climate and Capitalism*, July 15, 2014](#)

The Green New Deal depends on continued growth. Our focus must be on finding ways to decrease production while increasing humanity's quality of life

The world has over half a century of experience with programs that claim to help nature or feed the planet while they do the opposite. The twin crises of the early 21st century are economic and ecological collapse. Should we increase production to create more jobs and accept horrible environmental damage? Or, should we protect a livable world at the cost of causing more unemployment?

An increasingly popular answer is the “Green New Deal” (GND): create “green jobs” in order to jump start the economy. But the GND might not provide long term employment and could cause major environmental harm. Digging beneath the surface appearance of the GND requires exploring its family tree: the Green Revolution, Green Capitalism and the Green Economy.

The Green Revolution

As capitalism spread across the globe, hunger and starvation spread with it. Hoarding food and selling it to those who have plenty has always been more profitable than sharing food with those who need it.

By the middle of the 20th century, agribusiness decided that new plant varieties could be the focal point of a “Green Revolution” that would “feed the world.” According to Stan Cox, dwarfing genes “allowed the plant to divert less energy to making stems and leaves and allowed the farmer to apply much more nitrogen fertilizer without making the plants get too tall and fall over.” But these new varieties required pesticides and were more vulnerable to diseases. [1]

For at least 10,000 years, humans have been using “open pollination” seeds which could be gathered and planted the next year. The Green Revolution also promoted hybrid seeds, especially for corn. But hybrid seeds did not reproduce traits sought by farmers. Those who use them must return to the seed company each year. Hybrids fostered agricultural dependency.

One of the best summaries of the effects of hybrid corn is in Carmelo Ruiz' story of Henry Wallace, the agrarian progressive who was Franklin Roosevelt's Secretary of Agriculture. According to Ruiz, “Among the most celebrated attributes of hybrid corn is the ease with which it can be harvested by machine.” Huge fields with “genetic uniformity created a dream situation for pests.” [2, p 10] As with dwarf varieties, this generated a need for pesticides. Rapid growth as well as pesticide destruction of the soil's natural fertility created a need for fertilizers.

A huge increase in output resulted: “between 1950 and 1980, U.S. corn exports were multiplied times 20.” [2] Results also appeared in increased farming costs, impoverishment of family farmers, and further concentration of wealth in agriculture.

Was this truly the price that had to be paid in order to “feed the world?” Is it possible that the same yield increases could have occurred if research had gone in another direction? Ruiz quotes geneticist Richard Lewontin as concluding, “Virtually no one has tried to improve the open-pollinated varieties, although scientific evidence shows that if the same effort had been put into such varieties, they would be as good or better than hybrids.” [2]

Research focused on developing hybrids because they were part of an overall agenda to concentrate capital. Proponents of the Green Revolution identified a real problem (hunger), but they trumpeted a solution friendly to big business which created as many problems as it solved. Meanwhile, a low-tech solution was ignored.

Green Capitalism

In 2010, a *Forbes* article praised Coca-Cola for “going green.” To project a green image of itself, Coke developed partnerships with Conservation International and World Wildlife Fund as it completed a takeover of the organic bottled-tea company, Honest Tea. Tom Philpott noted that, at about the same time, Coke “shareholders voted by a 3-to-1 margin to continue using BPA, a toxic industrial chemical, in the lining of its soft-drink cans.” [3]

Coke is merely one drop in a sea of green products. Websites abound with everything from green clothes and hybrid cars to eco-friendly vacations. During the 1970s, such “Green Capitalism” often catered to the increased awareness of loss of biodiversity and toxins such as heavy metals and organic compounds. But it has not infrequently been used in environmentally destructive ways.

One of the more insidious corporate products has been “rubber mulch.” “Rubber leachates are known to be harmful to human health; effects of exposure range from skin and eye irritation to major organ damage and even death.” [4] Despite the serious dangers lurking within discarded tires, corporations began shredding them to produce rubber mulch for landscaping and putting on children’s playgrounds. They market it as “environmentally friendly” because it reuses tires rather than sending them to landfills.

By the 1980s, more and more people were attending to ocean acidification, damage to the ozone layer, resource depletion and even greenhouse gases (GHGs). Green Capitalism hit its stride with Earth Day of 1990 when, across the US, those claiming to be environmentalists unleashed their cheers for eco-friendly products. As Brian Tokar wrote of their defense of big corporations,

By reducing waste, partially restoring damaged ecosystems, investing in renewable energy, and generally promoting an environmental ethic, the oil, chemical and other highly polluting industries would become “stewards” of the environment. [5]

Overjoyed environmentalists believed they had made it to the big time—board members of major corporations began mimicking their vocabulary. Some distinguished between false green products and what they believed to be “truly green” products, such as composting toilets, energy efficient appliances, solar panels, windmills, and biofuels.

To this day, debates rage as to what is and is not a green gadget. Some could work wonders—but if and only if they were a part of getting rid of what is environmentally destructive. Other green products clearly stand in the way of serious solutions. Any type of “green” car remains an obstacle to designing walkable/bicyclable neighborhoods that are not addicted to cars.

A central fallacy of advocating “truly green” products is the belief that purchasing them would mean that non-green objects are not purchased. This tends not to happen. Take transportation. Moving in an environmental direction requires less reliance on cars. Thus, an increased devotion to bikes. But this does not mean that fewer cars are being manufactured. As people travel more, bicycles are not replacing cars, but are being used in addition to cars.

This happens throughout Green Capitalism. At best, “green” commodities replace non-green commodities while perpetuating the belief that happiness comes from purchasing objects. But often, they merely create new, additional green markets to aid the overall growth of capitalism.

Solar/wind devotees often mock eco-hustlers selling “green” cars to park in “green” McMansions. But their faith in solar/wind power reflects the same belief that purchasing the correct object can substitute for massive social change. “Green consumerism” is the flip side of “green capitalism.” The purchaser still advocates that individual consumer choices can solve environmental problems.

At the same time that the ideology of Green Capitalism was growing, serious struggles were intensifying. People were demanding that incinerators and other toxic facilities be shut down, that governments enforce standards against poisons, and that new legislation be written to tighten regulations.

But corporations vehemently fought the Precautionary Principle, which would require products to be proven safe before their introduction. When there has been a decrease in harmful production, it has typically been due to public protest and/or legal action. [6] Once again, we see that high tech proposals (new products) have not solved the problem at hand (toxic production) but that low tech (protests and legal actions) have been core to most successes.

Green Capitalism addresses a real issue: production that is harmful to workers, communities, consumers and ecosystems. It offers two false solutions: (a) slapping a green label on the same old products and (b) promising that positive alternatives will replace negative ones when, in fact, they mainly add new product lines.

If you remove one toxin from production with huge fanfare and stealthily introduce two toxins, the problem has gotten worse while the Public Relations Department makes things appear better. Despite improvements here and there, the overall production of toxins has intensified under the “solution” of Green Capitalism.

The green economy

Though “Green Economy” is sometimes used interchangeably with “Green Capitalism,” there is an important difference between them. Green Capitalism refers to individual businesses selling their products, with an unspoken message that society can buy its way out of ecological collapse. Recent use of the term “Green Economy” is a re-branding of trends that have been underway for some time. These are reflected in the agreements that have sprung from summits including Kyoto, Japan (1997), and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2012).

The Green Revolution and Green Capitalism were based on specific changes in technology and are therefore easier to comprehend than the Green Economy, which is centered more around legal refinements in trading schemes. The Green Economy is also the corporate response to an acute public consternation with climate change, though it claims to address many environmental problems. The popularity of its carbon trading schemes shot up during the first decade of the 21st century as the devastation of climate change began growing exponentially.

The grand plan behind carbon trading was that every industry would begin with a given amount of certificates (or permits or credits) granting it the right to emit a certain amount of toxins. If that company found that it could make more money by continuing (or increasing) its level of pollution, it could buy permits from another company that was able to meet its target. Since the corporation selling its permits would get additional income for polluting less, it would theoretically have a competitive edge. As time went on, less and less pollution would be allowed, thereby generating more market pressures for environmental responsibility.

While regulations have needed to be strengthened ever since the first ones were written, pollution trading has its origin in theories designed to undermine them. When Al Gore went to the Kyoto climate summit in 1997, he argued that the U.S. would sign onto an agreement only if two conditions were met: “that mandated reductions in emissions be far less ambitious than originally proposed, and that any reductions be implemented through the market-based trading of ‘rights to pollute.’” [5]

In a great irony, Gore would become the darling of environmental liberals because right-wingers so viciously attacked him for advocating *any* carbon standards. In fact, the then-Vice President was the key player in ensuring that the accords were based on free market economics. Though the incoming Bush administration failed to sign onto the Kyoto accords, they were enthusiastically endorsed by the EU, whose Emissions Trading System (ETS) went into effect in 2005.

The core flaw with using free market schemas to reduce pollution is the belief that “free” markets exist. Since the first corporation came into being, it has done everything in its power to gain special favors and exemptions from governments. Free market economic theories do *not* propose worthwhile goals that can be improved with refinement—they are ideological smokescreens to pull the covers over incestuous relationships between corporations and governments that pretend to control them.

Some of the many handouts found with carbon trading and off-setting schemes include:

- “grandfathering” corporations by giving them pollution credits free rather than charging for them;
- “godfathering” highly polluting industries like steel and cement by giving them extra permits;
- allowing corporations to pass cost increases from purchasing pollution permits onto consumers via higher prices;
- allowing corporations to continue (or increase) pollution by purchasing credits from poor countries for promising not to begin a project that never would have begun; and,
- tolerating accounting tricks, such as a company buying credits, using them for compliance requirements, and then selling an equivalent amount of permits.

Carbon “offsets” were soon applied to the lungs of the Earth in the proposal, “Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation” (REDD). REDD was designed to allow rich countries to purchase credits from poor countries which promised not to cut down forests.

One of the worst problems of the REDD version of offsets is that it often requires indigenous forest dwellers to be driven from their homes so that the land they have lived on for millennia will be empty. REDD proponents claim that forested land must be devoid of inhabitants if it is to be “protected.” [7] Once indigenous people are gone, there is no one on the land to observe, report and prevent illegal logging.

The Green Revolution and Green Capitalism pushed high-tech solutions when available low-tech alternatives would have better dealt with the problems identified. With the Green Economy, those recommending international climate deals strenuously avoid real solutions:

1. The way to reduce the burning of fossil fuels is to require industry to burn less fossil fuel; and,
2. The way to reduce the logging of forests in poor countries is to enlist the aid of those who have lived in the forests rather than driving them out.

As with the Green Revolution and Green Capitalism, the Green Economy creates new problems without solving targeted problems. Since it has been in effect, GHGs have increased—with the only exceptions being during times of economic downturn. [5, 8] Similarly, the November 2012 general strike in Spain brought a large part of production to a standstill, resulting in “18.6% less energy consumption compared to a normal work day.” [9]

The Green New Deal

As economic crises of the early 21st century deepen, right wing forces call for more cutbacks and “austerity.” Economic justice activists ask for more programs to guarantee work. Environmentalists increasingly insist on a reduction in the burning of fossil fuels. The two sides frequently talk past each other, either ignoring the environmental or job effects of their solutions.

The Green New Deal (GND) promotes public works based on environmentally friendly jobs. Could it be *the* simple solution? But the solution itself generates problems. The GND

might not bring full employment or anything close to it. Green production might not replace non-green production, but only map a new route to capital expansion. Green production itself is likely to lead to wars for the Conquest of Green Territories. In fact, “land grabs” which are well underway in Latin America and Africa appear to be the initial phase of such wars. [10]

And there are alternate solutions that are much simpler and less problematic. If people are out of work, why don't we just share existing work among everyone by reducing the work week? If people are being driven out of their homes, why not have a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions? If some people don't have enough of what they need to survive, why not switch to producing things that endure so that everyone has what they need? All of these can be accomplished while burning a lot less fossil fuel. That's especially true if we curtail manufacturing products we don't need, including (but not limited to) cars for single person occupancy, cement for medical insurance buildings, and enough arms to kill everyone in the world many times over. [11]

The New Deal unmasked

The New Deal (ND) built projects that the U.S. needed. But myths allow the Democratic Party to take credit for solving unemployment in a peace economy, which it failed to do. Gabriel Kolko's special report on the ND clears up multiple misperceptions. They include the false beliefs that President Herbert Hoover did nothing to respond to the great depression which began in 1929 and that Franklin Roosevelt campaigned for a New Deal. [12]

Perhaps the greatest illusion is that the ND solved unemployment. A glance at the figures reveals that unemployment was 4.2% just before the depression in 1928, shot up to 23.6% in 1932, dropped to 16.0% in 1936 and surged to 19.0% in 1938.

The major historic event consistently bringing unemployment down was the huge manufacturing expansion that accompanied U.S. entry into WWII. Unemployment could have been lessened enormously by passage of the Black Bill for a 30-hour work week. But big business vehemently opposed it, resulting in lack of support from FDR.

The global green new deal

In 2008, Geoffrey Lean wrote that a UN plan for a Green New Deal “will be formally launched in London next week.” He noted that the GND “draws its inspiration from Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, which ended the 1930s depression.” UN leaders promised that “‘green growth’ will rescue the world's finances.” [13]

The very next spring the UN released its core description of a world-wide plan for recovery called the Global Green New Deal (GGND). Its list of collaborators included the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). [14]

With the draconian attacks on working class standards of living being the predominant corporate response to the economic crisis beginning in 2008, the UN document established that there was

still a “liberal” wing who felt that government-stimulated growth would be the best route to recovery: “the world economy needs the stimulus provided by a GGND because the unregulated market cannot resurrect itself on its own...” [14]

The GGND was designed to expand Green Capitalism and the Green Economy. It emphatically states that economic issues must be understood as a compilation of techno-fixes: “Technological solutions will be essential drivers in the transition towards a green economy.” [14, p 16] Nowhere are problems presented as caused by social relationships of domination. Instead, it seeks to tie economic “improvement” to global carbon markets and REDD. [14, 15].

The UN think tank had produced a textbook of pseudo-green fads which divert attention from real solutions. For example, it proposes that a GGND would make buildings more energy efficient while making no reference to the now voluminous evidence that efficiency makes energy cheaper, which leads to economic growth and increased use of energy [14, pp 6, 19]. It shows no understanding that having a smaller amount of space per person reduces energy usage far more than a combination of multiple eco-gadgets. [15].

Without even a hint of an idea of urban redesign to reduce miles traveled, it proposes the opposite—“helping” poor countries by dragging them into international trade deals that would further the distance that manufactured products are transported.

The GGND’s agriculture section has a very brief mention of “organic farming inputs,” but it is totally silent on meat production. [14] Meat accounts for more GHGs than all other agricultural production and exceeds GHGs of the entire transportation sector. [16]

The UN’s energy plan believes in a “need to develop renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, tidal and geothermal.” [14] But its only hopes for decreasing fossil fuel use are “global carbon markets” and weak calls for voluntary reductions in subsidies to fossil fuel industries. [14.] With no plan to actually restrict the extraction, refining and sale of fossil fuels, the UN hopes to add the alternative fuel market on top of the existing fossil fuel market as a way to expand the total energy market.

Enter the European Greens

A British “Green New Deal Group” had already been thinking of a GND. A 2009 discussion between *Turbulence* editor Tadzio Mueller and Frieder Otto Wolf, an early member of the German Green Party, drew sharp lines. Mueller claimed that the essential flaw in the GND was its being a “driver of growth.” Wolf countered that a GND would open up left possibilities by responding to “the triple crunch” of energy, climate and economic crises. Wolf never responded to Mueller’s basic argument that the GND was a platform for expanding production, which is at the root of environmental crises. [17]

The European Green Parties (GPs) soon made the GND a centerpiece of their economic perspectives. By 2010, documents such as “Why we need a Green New Deal” figured prominently in the website of The Greens in the European Parliament. [18]

In contrast to the pro-corporate UN paper, the European GP sites are full of cutting edge statements (such as critiques of bee-killing toxins and GMO-contaminated food). A thread running through the European Green proposals is job creation. But they make no suggestion for a shorter work week and seem unaware that an environmental society will require much less work. For example, they endorse the very positive goal of “walkable neighborhoods,” but with no comment on the obvious fact that if people walk instead of driving cars, there will be enormously less automobile production (and less of all related industries). Their call for walkable neighborhoods is contradicted by proposals for more electric cars. [19]

Their plan for more electric cars is contradicted by the call for less electricity from nuclear power [20, p 3]. The papers are so rife with ideas that work against each other that the reader is left wondering if the European GPs have a coherent strategy.

European GPs demand more durable products, which is an essential part of building a green society. But they do not think through the implications. If products are designed to last a lot longer, many fewer products will be needed and shorter working hours will be a necessity.

The greatest contradiction in the European GP treatises is the way they deal with economic growth. They suggest an understanding of the problem: “growth has decreasingly been correlated with job creation or with the reduction of inequalities.” [18] Unfortunately, none of their documents make any preparations for a smaller economy.

In fact, the European Greens never acknowledge the intense debate between environmentalists concerning the role of renewable energy in creating a sustainable economy. They believe that Europe should have “a 100% use of renewable energy by 2050 at the latest.” [19] This is consistent with Jacobson and Delucchi’s hotly contested assertion that the world can attain “a 100% conversion to wind, wave and solar power” by 2030. [21]

A close scrutiny by Ted Trainer suggests many faults in their calculations. [22] An even more damning critique is the Corner House assessment that Jacobson and Delucchi incorrectly assert “that society and technology are separate.” [23, p 52] The Corner House authors insist that, contrary to the belief that “machines have a life of their own,” they are actually “adopted and used in a matrix of social, economic and political relationships.” [23]

The relationship particularly relevant to the GND is whether early 21st century capitalism is using alternative energy to replace fossil fuel or using it to placate environmentalists while adding it to fossil fuel extraction. In a thorough analysis of energy use, Richard York found the use of one unit of alternative energy “displaced less than one-quarter of a unit of fossil fuel energy and the displacement was only 10% for electricity.” [24] The Corner House authors conclude that Jacobson and Delucchi’s ahistoric faith in alternative energy as a solution to fossil fuel “reflects a particularly virulent form of machine fetishism.” [23]

Rather than opening a discussion of the role of alternative energy in capitalist society, the European GPs slam the door shut, implying that an increase of one unit of solar energy automatically means a reduction of one unit of fossil fuel energy. They overlook the growing

number of authors who for years have concluded that solar and wind can play a critically important role in building a rosy future for humanity *but if and only if* we scale down production.

Even worse are GP policies that lead directly to growth. They endorse energy efficiency (EE) as strongly as the UN, with equal unconcern that EE results in more, rather than less, energy use. Their call for measures that will “stimulate job creation,” in the absence of a parallel call to decrease the hours of work, is a *de facto* proposal for economic growth. [19]

A different approach would be proposing core reductions which would form a coherent gestalt and pull together ideas such as 100% of energy from solar/wind power, jobs for all, walkable neighborhoods and durable products. These would be reductions in:

- working hours;
- total energy usage (not merely fossil fuel); and,
- total industrial production.

The foremost task of a serious GP program would be to describe how these essential reductions can be accomplished while improving the quality of life. But the European GP program on “Industry” explicitly advocates growth. They assure corporate leaders of a plan that “stimulates the economy.” [20, pp 3, 5]

Greens in the U.S.

In a 2011 article in *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, David Schwartzman maintains that the GND can provide a transition to a post-capitalist society by environmentalists and labor joining together with a program for green jobs. He disputes those who reject the GND because it does not call for the immediate creation of socialism. Such a rejection lacks any strategy of class struggle. [25]

Absent from Schwartzman’s analysis is mention of the huge mobilizations against extraction industries, including mining across the globe and anti-oil and anti-coal efforts in the US. Since his article was published, anti-fracking conflicts have mushroomed. His advocacy of a blue-green alliance is on target, but, why not bring anti-fossil fuel activists and labor together with a program for a much shorter workweek, much more leisure time and democratic control of production?

When Jill Stein ran for President in 2012 representing the Green Party of the U.S. (GPUS), her core campaign statement addressed “A Green New Deal for America.” That speech repeats many excellent portions of the GPUS program addressing social justice but makes no reference to the limits of growth.

The GPUS electoral speech has fallacies parallel to the European GP manifestos. It repeats the claim that Roosevelt’s “New Deal programs helped us out of the Great Depression” and is a model for ending unemployment. It aims to “shift to an economy in which 100% of our electricity is generated renewably” without realizing that 100% renewable energy can only characterize an economy which is much smaller than that of the US. [26]

It wisely points out that “greening our economy also reduces the drivers of preventable chronic disease, which consume a staggering 75% of health care costs.” [26] The author does not notice the contradiction between reducing the overweight sickness industry (which would reduce overall GDP) and saying that green businesses will grow the economy.

False hopes vs real fears

It would not be surprising to find the GND being sold most vigorously to communities that would be most victimized by it. The U.S. black community has been in permanent depression and is in urgent need of help. When white unemployment was 6.9% in August 2012, black unemployment stood at 14.8%. [27] Unemployment is particularly devastating to those with fewer resources of their own or family members to fall back on. Bill Quigley notes that “Whites have 22 times more wealth than blacks and 15 times more wealth than Latinos.” [28]

On the surface, the GND may seem the ideal solution. But it leaves out that communities of color not only suffer from a legacy of unequal wealth distribution, but also from a legacy of toxic dumps, poisonous incinerators and a variety of other industrial contaminants. As pointed out, the Green Economy does not replace toxic production with “green” production—it adds “green” products on top of existing poisons to expand capitalist growth. Because it rests on a cornerstone of economic growth, the GND would have the identical effect.

No matter how “green” the product itself was, it would mean a new influx of poisons from mining, processing, manufacturing, transportation and disposal within the GND’s full life cycle. The communities that would be hardest hit from this would be those it claims to help: low income communities of color.

David Bacon writes of what a growth economy means for Zapotec resistance to gold and silver mines in southern Mexico, which has resulted in multiple killings of mine opponents. The mines would destroy aquifers that villagers depend on for water and leave cyanide-laced wastewater in huge open-air pits. [29] In the U.S. and Canada, the best known resource struggles are those against fracking and tar sands. For indigenous peoples around the world, the fight is often against corporations extracting minerals. By the second decade of the twenty-first century, hundreds or perhaps thousands of struggles against economic growth of extraction industries broke out.

Blind faith that growth = jobs is disastrous. The economy grew 300 fold between 1913 and 2005. [30] That was many times greater than population increase, which means that everyone would have multiple jobs if they flowed from growth. Growth cannot provide anything more than a temporary fix for unemployment. Workers need jobs, not economic growth.

U.S. inner cities should be rebuilt in a framework totally outside of economic growth. We should have learned from the New Deal that a public works program cannot provide long-term employment in an economy that depends on unemployment to bring wages down. Rebuilding inner cities can be done simultaneously with a shorter work week if we reduce destructive production. A rational economic analysis would chart a path for rebuilding embedded in a larger picture of reducing what is socially useless.

Progressives often assume that poor countries must increase GHGs enormously to match the consumptive patterns of the overdeveloped world. For basic necessities such as housing, production may well need to increase. But this does not mean that these economic increases would be anywhere near the decreases in production, especially taking into account that they would be largely in extractive industries which could be paid for by reparations from rich countries. In other words, a “good life” throughout the globe does not mean everyone living extravagantly. Many people already enjoy lifestyles without the massive quantity of objects falsely believed to bring happiness.

At an Ecuadorian workshop on energy, an indigenous farmer stated, “My community doesn’t have electricity, but we don’t want the state to install it, either... we already have energy, through cultivating our own food, curing ourselves with medicinal plants, and maintaining our customs.” As Evo Morales explained, “We the indigenous people only want to live *well*, not *better*. Living better is to exploit, to plunder and to rob, but living well is to live in brotherhood.” [23, p 6]

Contradictions of the GND with itself

The GND has won more left support than its predecessors, the Green Revolution, Green Capitalism and the Green Economy. In part, this is because a GND is as easy to understand as the Green Economy is obtuse. Its very simplicity has pulled many an activist into the vortex of the UN and its allies, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. To put it bluntly: The GND is appealing because corporate media is so successful at convincing people that growth is essential for solving every economic problem.

Let’s not ignore the key contradiction of the GND: Though a rebuilding program would reduce unemployment some, those effects could only be temporary. What would a society do once the inner cities were rebuilt? A rational answer would be to stop rebuilding. But since it has no plan to “share the work” via a shorter workweek, accomplishing its rebuilding goal would bring the GND right back to the unemployment problem. After its rebuilding goal was accomplished, the GND would have no alternative except to continue building to keep employment high.

In fulfilling its need to build beyond rational needs, the GND would contradict its other basic premise: environmental protection. The GND ignores the huge number of demands which equate to creating a better quality of life by producing less of what is destructive:

- The call for ending U.S. hyper-militarism with endless wars and hundreds of military bases around the world could subtract as much as \$1 trillion from the U.S. economy.
- Every struggle against extractive industries, whether to preserve forests, mountains, rivers and/or to oppose mining of numerous metals and fossil fuels, is inherently an effort to lower production.
- Resistance to international trade deals shows awareness that countries do not need to import goods simply because other areas have worse labor and environmental standards.

- Opposition to genetically modified organisms and the many other ways that food is contaminated reflects an understanding that the world can feed itself with much less costly methods.
- Those challenging the massive production of toxins understand that we would live healthier lives without manufacturing so many chemicals.

Advocates of a GND never address how such an enormous economic reduction could occur while the economy is expanding.

Protecting the corporations?

The three versions of the GND share fundamental features:

- although they may (or may not) call for eliminating the contamination of food with GMOs, they neglect the massive waste in packaging and processing and ignore the greatest contribution to GHGs in the food industry—meat production;
- although they may (or may not) advocate walkable neighborhoods, they have no plan for the reduction and elimination of private cars;
- they endorse alternative energy, yet say nothing about the need to reduce the total quantity of energy generated;
- although they may (or may not) explain the need to reduce a particular part of the economy (militarism or the sickness industry), they make no mention of the need to reduce total industrial production;
- they ignore the need to reduce the work week in order to expand employment while addressing environmental catastrophes.

The conceptual framework that permeates the GND and its predecessors is reliance on economic growth over alternatives which could achieve promised goals but without dire environmental consequences. With growth as the *sine qua non* of capitalism, it is clear that all four false green solutions have been designed as ways to rescue capitalism while using the verbiage of environmentalism.

Roosevelt's New Deal was developed in the context of not just a collapsing economy, but of a young Soviet Union abroad and Socialist and Communist Parties in the U.S. growing rapidly along with the desperate desire of U.S. corporations to head them off. Ever since the ND was enacted as a way to block socialism, the 1% have been gnawing at the bit to undermine its accomplishments. Efforts to reverse the gains of the ND were begun during the presidency of Jimmy Carter and picked up steam with every administration since. Today, bipartisan efforts to destroy Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid lunge into territory where even Ronald Reagan feared to tread. The GND is well-named, since, as with Roosevelt's ND, it would save capitalism, not humanity or the planet.

How the GND could reduce long-term unemployment

Ironically, a GND might actually bring long term unemployment down. But it would happen in a way completely different than anything currently promised. Just as Roosevelt's New Deal only

resolved unemployment with WWII, the internal logic of the GND would plunge it into war on two fronts. A gargantuan industrial construction would be required to change all existing steel mills and cement kilns to run on alternative energy.

The result would be a War on Nature. The fate of any stream, river or lake adjacent to mining operations would be sealed to secure metals for infinitely expanding “green” construction. Humans (and other species) that thrive on the natural sounds of high wind areas would be forced to sacrifice them to the roaring hum of armies of windmills. Prophets of green growth are already expressing enthusiastic visions of habitat annihilation:

the U.S. government ... should invest ...very aggressively in transformative 21st-century technologies like renewable energy, genetic engineering, biotechnology and nanotechnology, on a huge scale. The U.S. government could put a trillion dollars into each of these industries over the next ten years...I’m not talking about building solar panels for sale in the market; I’m talking about carpeting the Nevada desert with solar panels, building a grid coast-to-coast to transmit it ...[31]

There is no shortage of documentation of the disruption of nature’s quietude by windmills; but the damage of solar panels may not be as widely known. In 2011, the Sierra Club sued the California Energy Commission regarding the Calico Solar Project whose huge plant could impact rare plant and animal species. [32]

The other Green War would be directed against those who live on that land. Low income people are quite familiar with the destruction of lives from extraction, transportation, manufacture and disposal of industrial products. Green growth would bring more of the same.

It is hardly an accident that America’s longest war is in a country that is both a potential pathway for oil and “could fulfill the world’s desire for rare-earth and critical minerals.” Afghanistan is rich in gold, lead, zinc, mercury, limestone, gypsum, tin, copper, lithium, and uranium, along with lesser-known carbonatite, tourmaline, barite, celestite, fluorite, magnetite and talc. The country’s rare earth elements, important for alternative energy, “may be triple the current estimates.” [33]

Would the Green World Order mean that Venezuela might have less reason to fear an invasion aimed at gaining access to its heavy oils? Or, would it mean an additional invasion of Bolivia to grab its lithium for green batteries? Would northern Africa no longer need to fear attacks to secure Libyan oil? Or, would new green armies to secure solar collectors for European energy be added to existing armies? Across the globe, those marching with the red, white and blue banner of the War for Oil would continue to invade. But they could be joined by those marching with a green banner. That would ensure corporate growth by adding alternative energy to the energy already provided by fossil fuels.

Four Green Horsemen of the corporate apocalypse

Through the four supposed “green” paths runs the assumption that increasing the GDP is necessary to solve problems. In reality, this has not been true since the middle of the 20th

century. [34] There has been much more production than necessary to provide everyone with a good life. Rather than increasing GDP, it is necessary to shift to producing things that people actually need. At this point in history, the major effect of increases in GDP is to hasten climate change and otherwise destroy Earth's ecosystems.

Late capitalism has expanded by increasing the quantity of useful goods by a miniscule percentage while vastly expanding production that is useless or harmful. Finding ways to decrease production while increasing the quality of life is the task of the 21st century.

The Green Revolution, Green Capitalism, and the Green Economy each claimed that economic growth was necessary when it was not. Based on expanding the market economy, each one failed to solve the problem it defined, and, in fact, made the problem worse. For each there was an alternative solution which was not based on economic growth that could have coped with the problem without exacerbating environmental crises.

To feed people and increase agricultural yield, the Green Revolution might have conducted research on open pollination. Instead, its emphasis on hybrids aided agribusiness in its quest to control and destroy small farmers while claiming that it would "feed the world."

Green Capitalism was the alternative to mass struggles against toxic contamination in the production and disposal of commodities. It waved new green products to shift attention from serious regulation and to replace social solutions with personal lifestyle changes. New green product lines were typically added to non-green ones.

As awareness of climate change mushroomed, the Green Economy diverted attention from the need to stop burning fossil fuels. The cap 'n trade shell game was hatched as international agencies played leading roles in trying to convince the world that CO2 can decrease while industrial production increases.

Similarly, the Green New Deal addresses very real problems: unemployment, a decaying infrastructure and the need for production that would not render the world unlivable. Though the GND may manifest a deep and sincere concern by many of its adherents, it would lead in the opposite direction of where humanity needs to go.

Like the New Deal of the 1930s, a GND might temporarily slow unemployment, which would then increase. It would lead directly into Wars for the Conquest of Green Territories, not because of bad decisions by individual leaders but because war would be inherent in the growth dynamics of corporate environmentalism.

European Greens call for a spiritual reawakening while GPUS calls for "electoral democracy." [25] Thus, the European Greens ask us to reawaken as consumers, a role in which we are virtually powerless, and GPUS wants to achieve democracy through various voting schemes, many of which have already been implemented in other countries and have accomplished little to nothing.

Both approaches leave aside the power that people truly have: our working lives. Imagine each group of working people asking themselves: Do we want to manufacture fall-apart stuff? Should we be producing things that poison our families and communities? Do we want schools where teachers are forced to robotocize children and medical services which entangle patients in insurance profits?

Imagine that working people actually had the power to vote on what to produce and how to produce it. Imagine that people were able to democratically decide how to create goods and services that would make the world a better place for their great-grandchildren.

The most positive aspect of the GND is its proposed labor/environmental alliance. Labor has the ability both to force social change and to organize a new society. Working people are hamstrung by the absence of a social vision that union bureaucrats crushed decades ago. A reborn labor movement, inspired by the understanding that it has the power to embrace and concretize environmental visions, would be something totally different. Such a red/green alliance could provide jobs for all by shortening the work week, which would be the basis for reducing the burning of fossil fuels and producing only those things that people need for good lives.

Along the road to understanding the simple environmental truism that we must produce “less of what we don’t need” there have been four shortcuts that lead to faith in the need for eternal growth. Although this analysis has implied that each of the “green” paths leads in a direction away from its goal, that may not actually be the case. It may be that only superficial goals, designed for public consumption, were the ones that failed. Each could have had a deeper, unstated agenda: expanded production, without regard to human need or ecological consequences. If that has indeed been the true goal, then each of the four green horseman is galloping heedlessly toward the apocalypse.

Don Fitz produces Green Time TV in St. Louis and is editor of [Green Social Thought: A Magazine of Synthesis and Regeneration](#). He is on the National Committee of the Greens/Green Party USA. He would like to thank Brian Tokar and Stan Cox for comments on an earlier version of this article. This article first appeared in [Links International Journal of Socialist Renewal](#).

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