

Interview with Greg Banks

Scandia, MI

START OF INTERVIEW

Interviewer (I): Mr. Banks could you tell me a little about the Green Party and how it was formed and how you became interested?

Greg Banks (GB): From what I understand the Green Party came out Democratic Germany because of the devastating environmental situation that Germany is in right now, the pollution drifts over to Germany and drops on Germany so, and German men told me that sixty percent of the forest were dead in Germany right now, that was about 1986 that he told me that, he was visiting here traveling all over the country, hitchhiking and he told me that he was real interested in the Green Party because they were doing something for him and his children and they got elected to parliament because of the fact that they were wanting to do something about that environmental situation over there. Of course, the parents of German children are looking at their children not having any trees to see anymore, no grass, no flowers, so they are very interested in ecology, much more than Americans who are very apathetic according to him, compared to the Germans. So the Americans Greens are joining the international Green Party that from what I know has its roots in Democratic Germany as a way to get our needs met in this country in kind of a global party rather than trying to do it through the two party system in this country which is been real ineffective so far.

(I): Mr. Banks could you tell me the basic principles and the lease of the Green Party because you know them?

(GB): Sure, the Green Party in this country is a very loosely connected group of individuals, what they, the Committee of Correspondence is the national communication network, what it does is, get information out to anyone who calls themselves Green, about action that are taking place and about the environment, or nonviolence, future focus type ways of sustaining the globe, the planet that we are living on. The Committee of Correspondence serves the purpose to get the word out; from the first meeting of the Committee of Correspondence ten key green values are developed the first of the ten key green values is ecological wisdom and what that basically means is putting earth first and when you spend a dollar looking at your either spending that dollar for the environment or against the environment so for a capitalist bunch of folk like we are in this country we want to look at is this dollar that I'm spending going for the environment or against the environment.

(I): So Mr. Banks is the Green Party against nuclear weapons, against nuclear power, or both, how do they stand on that issue?

(GB): First of all I think it's important to mention that the Green Party is a real loose affiliation type thing you know where people aren't paying members of a party and they do not put

candidates into the arena very often but most Greens I would say are against nuclear power. What were the others?

(I): Nuclear Weapons

(GB): Nuclear weapons, yes definitely against, most people are in the Greens.

(I): Do the Greens support alternative energy sources as opposed to burning fossil fuels?

(GB): Yes, that would be part of ecological wisdom, saving the planet.

(I): We have a toxic waste problem in this country right now, are you for gradual phasing out of this processes or banning toxic waste and the process that produce them?

(GB): Yes I am for immediate ban of all that stuff and that's my personal feelings and I don't speak for the Green Network or the Green Party, I speak for myself and most other folks that call themselves Green too speak for themselves and not really say I speak for the Green Party or any kind of Green Network, because no one is that I know of given that privilege, I am affiliated with the Green Network, myself and there is no spokesperson that I'm aware of that has that kind of sanction from the group to speak for the group.

(I): Okay, on the topic of farming are you in favor of organic farming or do you feel that there is a place for pesticides and other chemicals used in modern farming methods?

(GB): I personally am for organic farming I think that the quality of the food is far superior taste wise and health wise and you know it doesn't affect people's behavior and their whole lives the way these chemicals are, these unknown chemicals that we are using to kill off bugs and going into our water supply and we don't know what happened to them you know I just...

(I): How do you about the whole rainforest issue, depletion of the rainforest in tropical areas?

(GB): I feel like a complete waste of valuable resource and I don't really understand it, I've been talking to folks about it for years you know, in particular not buying food from Burger King, and you know boycotting Burger King for one, they buy their beef from Brazil and there are countries that raise cattle through deforestation of the rainforest, I have a lot of apathy for that kind of stuff and laughing it off and so what that attitude that I feel personally very strongly that we can live without Burger King and go to McDonalds. The second of the ten key Green values is grassroots democracy and that means political work in your home community trying to make sure that what's happening there is aimed at sustaining the planet and looking towards the future and what our children are going to have that we leave a legacy of flower and trees for them to enjoy. The third is personal and social responsibility and all of these values kind of complement each other, I think that personal and social responsibility are pretty self-explanatory, you know personal responsibility as far as the environment being responsible to your brothers and sisters for the way you act and what you do in your everyday life. Non-violence is the fourth, non-violence is pretty self-explanatory too, having peace in yourself in your own life, personally, you know not fighting with your lover, not fighting with your children, peace starting with yourself and then working for non-violence from that point out. Decentralization is the fifth and that comes out of a consensus opinion of a lot of Green folks that the centralized governments that

we have are outdated and that bioregionalism is a much more sensible way of governing where people that live in a certain bioregions, and bioregions of the Great Lakes would be responsible for what happened in that bioregion politically and there by sustaining that bioregion and the resources of that bioregion, like ours would be the Great Lakes of course and massive resource that is being contaminated and wasted and destroyed by a government that's so far distant from it that they don't really understand it or have any real emotional ties to it like people who live there do. So decentralization of government in bioregionalism as a way of replacing that centralized type of government. The sixth is community based economics and that's like, so like cottage industry type of economics where people are working in their community to support their community to support their community and growing food in their community to support their community, which is very helpful of course when people eat the food that is grown in their region and has the nutrients needed to sustain the life in that region whereas if they eat food from another region say a tropical region that does not have the nutrients needed to sustain life in the cold north region. The seventh key Green value is global responsibility, which kind of feeds off of social and personal responsibility and to look at things in a more global sense than we do in this country, we tend to look at things like what is going to get me what I want right now rather than how it is going to effect the rest of the people so what we have is a bunch of apathetic Americans and feeling sorry for themselves that maybe they don't have a new VCR and on the other side of the globe in South Africa people are starving to death you know and in the African continent people are starving to death so it's looking at things more in a global sense and fairness to our brothers and sisters all over the world rather than just what we want right now and that's where we get global responsibility. The eighth key Green value is inclusiveness and that basically means including everybody and not being so self-centered and selfish, and including everyone wants and needs not just what the Americans want or say what the French want. The ninth key Green value is post patriarchal values, it comes out of a hope that we are past the patriarchal type society and moving into a more equal society with women and men working together and respectful of each other's feelings the wants of women and the wants of men being equal rather than men putting down women and women putting down men type of things. The tenth of the key Green values is future focus sustainability and that is trying to look down the road rather than immediately, like pesticide issues is something that is really relevant here and when we look at future focus sustainability we look at pesticides as well we will get a crop in this year by killing off the bugs but in a few years the water supply will be so contaminated that there won't be anyone around to eat the crop because everyone will have died of thirst from lack of water to drink.

(I): Mr. Banks I read through Green literature that Upper Great Lakes Green take an active role in Native American affairs, do you uphold the treaty rights of Native Americans as they are?

(GB): Yeah most Green folks do I think, again the Green network is real loose about everything you know if someone did not support treaty rights of Native Americans they can still be affiliated with the, or call themselves Green and nobody would get real concerned with that. What they would is you know people that call themselves Green get Green literature through the mail and they do what they can through their own community and they may have opposing views to other folks who call themselves Green.

(I): Personally do you support the sovereignty of the Native American tribes and self-determination or often the government view of assimilation into American society, capitalistic society or in termination of tribes and why do you feel that way?

(GB): I feel that after attending the sunrise service in Apwa (Spelled phonetically) last fall when we had our Green Network gathering here and learning something about their religion and their culture, it so different from ours and so wise in so many ways, especially ecological ways that I don't believe the [Unintelligible] of that culture is a worthwhile thing to anybody, I think we need to sustain that culture and use it to help us sustain our planet.

(I): Mr. Banks do you feel that any one of these basic green values is any more important than the other?

(GB): I don't personally, and this is not just simply a list of 10 separate issues but aspects of a single unified world view and are interconnected in a very basic way. Starting from any one of these values you can derive all of the others not one of them can be promoted without the other ones being promoted.

(I): Thank you very much Mr. Banks

END OF INTERVIEW