

Rising Sun

Organizing for Social Change in Tasmania

By Lilla Hass

What do we mean by “social change”? When we look all around us, and wake to gross economic injustices, the treatment of asylum seekers, the wanton destruction of rainforests, the abuse of farm animals, the wiping out of diversity of species, all for profit and the hoarding of wealth, many of us are called on to assess the root causes of these practices. How is the gap between what we might most value and what we actually experience so huge? What follows is an opportunity to join with others to replace our current direction with a more just and kinder social order.

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Women Proutists
of North
America

June 2014

INSIDE:

Principles for a
Balanced Economy

Neohumanistic Leadership

Biodiversity –
Underprotected
or Overprotected?

By Garda Ghista

According to economics professor David N. Laband,[1] biodiversity is overprotected. He says that the public demands excessive protection of biodiversity only because most of those people do not have to pay for its preservation. It is the landowners who are made to pay for protecting biodiversity. Urban residents want aesthetic

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*Before and after subsidized logging in Tasmania.
Photos by Ron Blakers www.robblakers.com.*

Editor's Reflections: Our Voices Rising

By Mirra Price

Winter came in on a high speed whirlwind which swept me off my feet for a time. It all started in January when I heard from an Ananda Marga worker that he wanted Women Proutists to retract a sentence from the editorial in the January, 2014 Rising Sun. The sentence in question is: "In many states, women's rights to abortion and preventive health care are being eroded by passage of repressive legislation".

After discussing this retraction request with other Women Proutists, I decided not to do the retraction. I stand behind the rights of women to have access to health care. In some states laws have been passed so that women cannot get abortions except in extreme cases of harm to the mother or fetus. What about mothers whose health is marginal, or who are living in extreme poverty, or who are teenagers? The rise in teen pregnancy is troubling (Eleven Facts, 2014.) While abortion is never an easy or a first choice in the case of difficult pregnancies, it must be an option. When abortion was not legal, many women had to resort to back alley abortions performed by unskilled practitioners (Gutmacher Institute, 2014).

In countries in which abortion is illegal, instead of there being fewer abortions, there are actually more, and many women die who seek illegal abortions (Cheng, March, 2014). Additionally, it is only poor women who would be prevented from getting abortions if abortion were made illegal. Rich and middle class women would still be able to buy abortions in other countries or from expensive clandestine practitioners. So I see this as a social justice issue.

It is a tricky issue because as a Proutist and neo-humanist, I certainly do not promote abortion. However, I also do not believe that women's bodies and lives should be controlled by laws championed by right-to-lifers who, on the one hand, say the life of a fetus reigns supreme, and on the other hand, have gone so far as to advocate killing doctors who perform abortions. Should the rights of an unborn child be considered above that of the mother? I believe that subjective approach with objective adjustment is important. While no one feels that abortion is a good alternative, until women and families have adequate resources to provide for children, it is a necessary option, when all other alternatives have failed. "Nothing is to be said against one who takes shelter of birth control system to get rid of household wants in the individual capacity if he belongs to a country where capitalism is still in vogue" (Sarkar, 1959, pp.38-39).

In an ideal society based on Prout principles of providing

minimum necessities of life to all, the need for abortion would be lessened and in the future, mostly eliminated, except for isolated medical cases. However, world society is very far from this pinnacle of progress. When women face the difficult choice of whether or not to terminate a pregnancy, they need to feel that they will have the resources to raise a healthy child and will be able to provide for the child economically.

Since women are economically disadvantaged, making only 77 cents on the dollar compared with white men in the U.S., they are already at a handicap in supporting a child, especially in one parent families (U. S. Census Bureau, 2010). Very young mothers, especially, may feel a social stigma in giving birth out of wedlock, and may be encouraged by their families to have abortions, rather than having a child who would have an uncertain future, and which would put financial, emotional and physical stress on families. It is important to take into account the whole family system, including communities and medical personnel, when making decisions about terminating pregnancies.

So many families in the U.S. are one-parent families. Only 67 percent of children 0-17 in the U. S. live with two married parents (U. S. Census Bureau, 2010). Women head of households often struggle to get child care, which now even some middle class families have difficulty to afford (Quart, 8/2013). How can single mothers work if they don't have adequate child care? What happens if they don't have paid maternity leave, which, unfortunately, is rarely provided by employers in this country (Finnigan)? Who takes care of all these children? Adoption could be an alternative, but, unfortunately, it doesn't work for all families, for various reasons, one of which is the rise of unscrupulous adoption agencies. Some adoption agencies make huge profits, sometimes actually stealing children, perpetrating various scams on parents from developing countries, like promising an education for their children in the U.S. Then, instead of enrolling the children in school, they sell children to the highest bidder among childless couples in the U.S. (Voight, K., 9/13/2013).

The culprit in the abortion issue is not the woman who may have to make a tough decision. The culprit is the capitalist system that partners with patriarchy, that uses women's bodies to sell every product imaginable, and which does not value women as human beings. Those who wish to keep women from having access to maternal health care, pregnancy testing, and social safety nets like Medicaid and food stamps, are not viewing women as equals.

We must work to provide all women with adequate education, health, housing, jobs and food. We must change attitudes toward women so that we may create a world in which women can walk alongside men, not one step behind. The bird needs both wings to fly. We must learn to work together with men in coordinated cooperation. We also need men who believe in social equality to become our allies.

In Helen Reddy's popular song from the 60s, "I am Woman", is the following line: "But I'm still an embryo with a long, long way to go until I make my brother understand." The winter has presented many challenges; yet with the spring, I am feeling a new surge of positive energy and momentum. I like to remember Sarkar's words, "Let womanhood be the vanguard of a new revolution which humanity must achieve for a glorious new tomorrow" (*A Few Problems Solved, Part 9*). Women, we are on the rise!

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What is Prout?

PROUT is an acronym for the Progressive Utilization Theory which was propounded in 1959 by Indian philosopher Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar. PROUT presents a viable alternative to the outmoded capitalist and communist socio-economic models. Neither of these theories has adequately met the needs of humanity.

Proutists are seeking to convey the comprehensive and visionary goals of PROUT theory, which combines the wisdom of spirituality, the struggle for self reliance and the spirit of economic democracy. As women who are Proutists, in this magazine, we are attempting to focus on the particular struggles that women face in attaining self reliance in society. However, we also wish to present the complete vision of Prout as a new ideology for a new world.

Toward the goal of being inclusive, we invite Proutists and others who are interested in providing a platform for social change to submit articles, letters to the editor, poetry, blogs, and other writings to Rising Sun. We want to take the pulse of the 99 percent and to try to reflect in some small way the voice of the people.

Key Principles of PROUT and Neo-Humanism

Neo-humanism expands the humanistic love for all human beings to include love and respect for all creation—plants, animals and even inanimate objects. Neo-humanism provides a theoretical base for creating a new era of ecological balance and planetary kinship.

Basic necessities guaranteed to all: In order to be able to actualize their highest aspirations, people need to have their basic needs met. Access to food, shelter, clothing, education and medical are fundamental human rights which must be guaranteed to all.

Balanced economy: Prout advocates regional self-reliance, cooperatively owned and managed businesses, local control of large scale key industries, and limits on the individual accumulation of wealth.

Women's Rights: Prout encourages the struggle against all forms of violence and exploitation used to suppress women. Prout's goal is coordinated cooperation, with equal rights between men and women.

Cultural Diversity: In the spirit of universal fellowship, Prout encourages the protection and cultivation of local culture, language, history and tradition.

World Government: Prout supports the creation of world government with a global constitution and common penal code.

Find out more about Women Proutists:

www.proutwomen.org

Or contact Mirra Price at 828-274-1683

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Neohumanistic Leadership

by Satya Tanner

Leadership - What's Your Story?

Leadership comes in many forms. According to Situational Leadership Theory (SLT), depending on the context, we might choose a different leadership approach. For example, a group with low competence but high commitment to the goals of the group will typically respond best to a directive approach ("Tell me what to do!"). On the other hand, a group with high competence but low commitment to the goals will need a more supportive and consultative approach that empowers staff members ("I'm an expert, so please value me!").

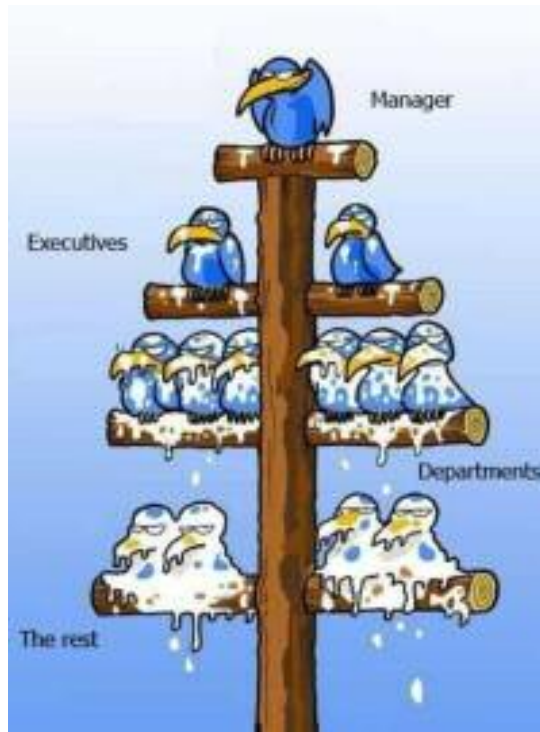
But why is it that two different leaders can tackle the same context ("Tell me what to do!") with a similar approach (a directive style) and receive an entirely different response from the group (great leader vs. terrible leader)? Of course there are many variables in such a problem, but one way to understand the situation is to use Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), a futures tool developed by Sohail Inayatullah. See Table 1 below.

The first level is called the litany and is often considered to be where the 'problem' shows, or where there are visible elements of the situation that is under analysis.

Here, it might refer to job satisfaction levels (and other indicators) under one leader vs. another. Is the staff happy with the leadership or not?

In the next level, we ask what systemic causes might be leading to the problem. Assuming that both leaders are trained equally in SLT, we might find limited issues at this level and instead have to dig deeper again.

The next level of causation is the world view. A world view is the lens through which we see the world. What



is important? From whose perspective? Eastern world view, Western world view? Masculine, feminine? In our leadership example, if both people have the same training and assuming there are no prejudices in the group, it is likely that the difference in satisfaction levels come from the world view of the leader. Does the leader value people over the task? Do they value status over equality? Do they see people as people or resources? A telling sign of a good leader is one who sees all people as having value and without inferiority or superiority. While they may have a higher organizational position or different strengths, they treat people with respect and from a cooperative paradigm (the basic tenets of coordinated cooperation).

Meanwhile, a problematic leader might resort to 'subordinated cooperation' values, treating others as though they are inferior, without trust or attempts to build trust, and seeing people as machines that are there to serve the leader.

Table 1: Causal Layered Analysis of Leadership Styles

CLA Level	Good leadership	Problematic leadership
Litany	happy staff	unhappy staff
System	Situational Leadership Theory	Situational Leadership Theory
Worldview	Coordinated cooperation	Subordinated cooperation
Story/metaphor	Leadership as the power to help others learn	Leadership as the power to tell others what to do

The final level, story/metaphor, often lies unconscious yet informs our actions with more potency than any other level because it is symbolic and emotional, effectively bypassing the rational brain. At this level we might find that a good leader has a story that leadership is the power to help others learn, leading to empowered staff members who feel that they will have the capacity to grow in whatever role they take on.

On the other hand, a problematic leader might have the story that leadership is the power to tell others what to do, thus leading to disempowered staff who will do the absolute minimum required, disengage and/or resist change activities. Every story has its limitations though some are more problematic than others. Stories of a heroic leader who swoops in to save the day might initially seem admirable, but upon closer inspection undermine the numerous examples of teams who collectively innovated their way out of difficult problems and situations.

For what purpose are you leading (ego or service?) and what is your leadership metaphor or story? What kind of worldview is informed by your story and how do the people around you experience your leadership style? Is your story based on one of trust, service and coordinated cooperation, or suspicion, ego and subordinated cooperation? By taking the time to identify and if necessary rewrite your leadership story, you can become a better leader and help make a positive impact on the world around you.

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Satya Tanner had a 16-year career as a pilot and aerospace engineer in the Royal Australian Air Force, leading people and managing projects. She has studied Prout at a post graduate level and has a passion for helping organizations and communities that are in search of innovation, leadership, healthy cultures and conscious business principles.



Alanna Hartzok, co-director of the Earth Rights Institute and the author of The Earth Belongs to Everyone, is currently running for Congress in the 9th District in Pennsylvania on the Democratic ticket. Her campaign will soon issue an Economic Democracy Manifesto that will contain three-tiered PROUT policy integrated with land value tax policy. Contact her at: alanna@earthrights.net or 717-264-0957.

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New Prout Book Selections in Each Issue:

In the next few issues, we are featuring the new book, Principles for a Balanced Economy by Roar Bjonnes, which clearly explains the five principles of Prout. The book is based on Prout's founder, P.R. Sarkar's, 1961 Ananda Sutram.

Principles for a Balanced Economy

By Roar Bjonnes

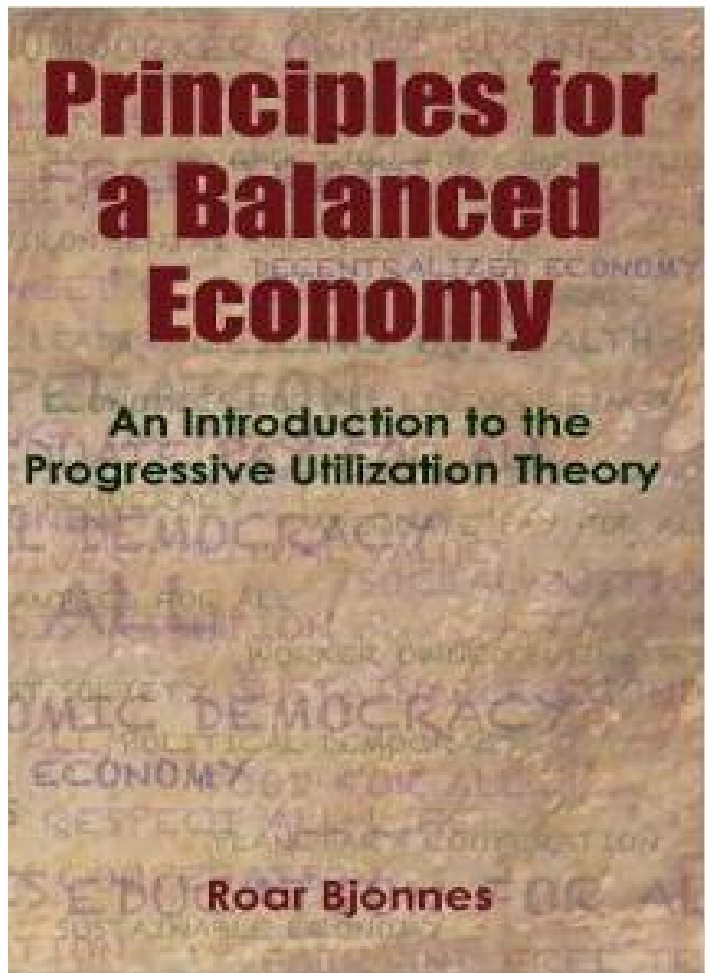
In Part Two we pick it up where we left off, continuing with the First Principle of Prout: "There should be no accumulation of wealth without the permission of society."

The Impact of Over-Accumulation of Wealth

Today we have a "free market" in name only. Due to the unlimited accumulation of wealth by individuals and corporations, a few mega-corporations have become so large that the rules of the free market cannot optimally function any longer. The result is a monopoly market economy ruled by giants such as Walmart and Exxon Mobil. This is not an accident but an inevitable consequence of unregulated markets, which eventually leads to an oligarchic and monopolistic command economy.

Countries where income is more evenly spread and wages are high are more prosperous than those countries with a small rich elite and a general population that is poor.

Scandinavian countries have one of the highest living standards in the world, and one of the most equal income distributions. On the other hand, the highest income disparities are usually found in poor developing countries, such as in India, where the majority of wage earners make less than two dollars per day. Indeed, in 2005 nearly 60.4 % of the world population had an income of less than 2.5 US \$/day and 42.2 % of the world population had an income of less than 1.25 US \$/day. In reality this means that most of the wealth in the world today is located in a few rich countries, and within those rich countries, such as the United States, most of the wealth is owned by about one percent of the population. Excessive wealth accumulation is therefore the rule rather than the exception today.



A modern economy is driven by consumption, and where people do not have the purchasing capacity to buy the goods produced by the manufacturers, the economy cannot expand. Indeed, many capitalists seem to forget that cutting wages of employees also reduces the purchasing capacity of their customers.

Over the past decades, growth in the United States has been mostly driven by an expansion of credit. In other words, as the real wage has been going down, consumers have been taking on more and more debt to maintain their lifestyle. As this in itself has not been sufficient, the government has also resorted to massive deficit financing. Today there is hardly an industrialized country that does not suffer from massive government debt. Not only countries in crisis, like Greece, Portugal and Italy, but also supposedly solid, well managed countries like Germany and Japan, reel under enormous debt. For example, while Italy's debt in 2010 stood at 119% of GDP, Germany's has reached 83% of GDP, and Japan 196% (CIA World Fact Book, 2011)!

With the current financial crisis, we are now at the end of this credit expansion, and as people realize they will have to start paying back what they borrowed, we can expect consumer spending to be

drastically curtailed.

Because of the extreme uneven distribution of wealth and the overarching tendency toward over-accumulation and economic instability, Stieglitz suggests that governments must improve the outcome by well-chosen interventions. Currently, these interventions are usually in the form of progressive income taxes.

Prout, on the other hand, suggests it is more effective to intervene by restructuring the economy itself.

An economy solely based on accumulation and profit creates mega-companies like Walmart, the world's largest retailer. These monopolies suppress competition, drive local companies out of business, manipulate markets and pay low wages to their workers.

The giant retailer's low prices comes indeed with a high cost: Walmart often forces its suppliers to close down shop and set up overseas where labor is cheap and thus keeps productions costs low. Such practices are very costly for the local economy As Charles Fishman writes in an article, Walmart helps us shop "our way straight to the unemployment line" (Fishman, 2003).

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Roar Bjonnes is co-founder of the Prama Institute, a holistic retreat center in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. He is a certified yoga health educator, a popular yoga columnist and a lecturer on yoga philosophy and history. He has been a Proutist for several decades, giving Prout presentations in the U.S. and Europe.



Another Form of Slavery

By Jyoti Wind

What is it about these times
that lets someone think
that if I pay you
I own you
and the time I've paid you for?

What is that in the collective mind
that is okay with that,
a form of slavery,
of control over another,
and is justified, supported,
and called good business smarts!

We do not own each other.
Money is a medium of exchange.
Gratitude and appreciation,
in this model,
are relegated to the children's table.

Obviously, slavery is alive and well!



Jyoti Wind is a poet and author. Her poetry has recently been published at Elephant Journal online and Crone Magazine; she has self-published several books of poetry and prose, a childhood memoir, and three anthologies. She is also an astrologer and can be reached at jyotiwind@gmail.com.

Women Proutist Profile

Satya Tanner

Women Proutists: What was your first contact with Women Proutists and PROUT (Progressive Utilization Theory)?

I grew up aware of Prout because my parents are keen Prout advocates. However I only got deeply involved when Prout College in Australia began offering online courses at post graduate equivalent levels. I took the course and loved it. I recently became involved with Women Proutists when I realized that a tangible way toward a better future for all is to help women gain economic independence; this has a really positive impact on men too.

Women Proutists: What drew you to PROUT/ Women Proutists?

I think that capitalism and communism have really failed us, but we continue to cling onto capitalism because we don't appear to have alternatives. Of course there are alternatives, and while Prout is still a theory, all the indicators such as the known benefits of cooperatives are starting to demonstrate that Prout principles and a three tiered economy (small business, cooperatives and government owned entities) provide a better way forward.

Women Proutists: What WP/PROUT projects have you participated in?

I have been to the Prout Research Institute (Venezuela), the Global Prout Convention in Denmark, I am undertaking a certificate in Prout Studies and in the future I would like to establish a centre based on "sadvipra" [spiritual revolutionary] leadership principles given by P.R. Sarkar.* Meanwhile, I'm using my leadership and innovation skills to help the WP organization develop a clear vision for what future they want for themselves.

WP: What is the most important target for Women Proutists? Why? How can it best be implemented?

I think that mass education is the most timely and most important goal for WP right now. Women and men cannot be liberated from patriarchal economic slavery unless we awaken their conscious to new ways of being—such as coordinated cooperation, how to develop a good business sense, etc.

WP: What do you see as a significant contribution WP can make to women in the United States? Worldwide? Why?

I think that WP can act to connect various great thinkers and provide a platform for education and action. Feminism in the USA has already done a huge deal of work in understanding the nature of subordinated cooperation and I think that this will be a vital asset in helping others move to new set of values.



WP: What is your personal vision for WP? How can it be made manifest?

I would like to see WP equally supported by both men and women. For Women Proutists to be a vibrant community of thinkers, activists, business people and educators who come together and make the world a better place by focusing on the economic liberation of women (and therefore ultimately men, too).

WP: How can WP help women achieve equality in leadership roles in conferences, retreats, seminars, etc.?

I think that WP should take multiple approaches. It would be important to run some conferences that are headlined by women only about issues that pertain to women. But I would also like to see avenues for participation with men who are also trying to escape the limitations of patriarchy. Men will play an important role in convincing other men to "make space" so that women can step up into the space.

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Recipe Corner

A regular column by Liina Laufer

As a lacto-vegetarian, I envy others their protein-rich breakfasts, so I make my own veggie sausage.

I love it for breakfast along with bagels, egg-free French toast (next post), home fries, or fruit. While you can get veggie sausage from a health food store, it is expensive and frequently has ingredients I avoid. So I make my own in large batches and slice it up and freeze it so I can pull out a few pieces for breakfast.

Making these sausages is a bit of a process,



but it is fun because you can mix it up and add different ingredients for different flavors. This is an Italian style recipe, but you can change it up to include apples and sage, maple syrup and sweet spices, and different kinds of beans. You can leave out many of the ingredients I include, but you definitely need vital wheat gluten, which keeps it all together. TVP and beans add texture and more flavor, as gluten alone is a bit dense and bland.

Veggie Sausage

Ingredients:

- ½ cup pinto beans or baked soybeans
- ¾ cup soup stock or water
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- ½ cup textured vegetable/soy protein (TVP)
- 1 cup vital wheat gluten flour
- ¼ tsp ground black pepper
- a dash of red pepper flakes
- 2 Tbs. Italian seasoning
- 1 Tbs. nutritional yeast
- 3 slices of sun-dried tomato, chopped finely

Instructions:

Combine beans, textured vegetable protein, and sun-dried tomatoes, in food processor and grind into a coarse crumble.

Place this mixture in a bowl; add nutritional yeast, spices, soy sauce, and soup stock and mix. Add vital wheat gluten flour and knead into a dough.

Divide the dough and roll into logs, and wrap each log in foil, parchment paper, or cloth wrappers. (I made undyed cloth squares to use, and tie them with twine.) Place the logs in a steamer and steam for 20 minutes, then flip the logs and steam for another 20 minutes. Lay them out to cool, and then unwrap. I like to slice them up and fry them for breakfast, but you can also serve whole or in sandwiches.

Please see Liina's blog at recipessdeliina.wordpress.com.

Organizing for Social Change in Tasmania

Continued from front cover

We consider efforts such as this to be the basis of social change, for in finding others who also care about the planet and also value fundamental human rights, we are able to create a voice for the voiceless.

When I first moved to Tasmania, I was struck by the polarization between the environmental groups (the “Greenies” as environmentalists are known) and their opposition: “The Loggers”. All environmental discourse seemed to revolve around the needs of these two groups. The loggers, supported by the government, wanted jobs, and blamed the Greens for their plight. The Greenies, on the other hand, wanted to save the old-growth forests from destruction, as well as stop the decimation of native animal species through loss of habitat, 1080 poisoning and other means of destruction. The Tasmanian Tiger had already gone extinct and the Tasmanian Devil seemed set to follow in its course.

However, when I reflected on the issues at hand, it seemed to me that this was more of an economic argument than an environmental one. Though the loggers blamed the Greens for low wages and lack of work, still another group was hiding in the wings. The timber companies that plow through our precious natural resources are large trans-national corporations, quite content to let the loggers blame the Greenies, meanwhile diverting all the profits to overseas CEOs and board members to use for yet another Mercedes or high-end apartment complex.

Other issues in Tasmania stand out:

Tasmania has the lowest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Australia, the highest number of high school drop-outs, the lowest rate of literacy, and the highest rates of teenage pregnancy, unemployment and youth suicide. As I came to settle in my new home, I wondered where I fit in and how I might help play a role in improving Tasmania’s socio-economic problems as well as raising awareness about the deeper issues of economic disparity and the powers at play. I figured that nothing beats education in helping the average person to understand what really is going on behind the scenes.

With these ideas in mind, during 2005, along with several friends, I launched the non-profit, “Future Tasmania”. At the time, it was just an idea, with no name, no framework and no Internet presence. Over the years, by hook or by crook, it’s grown into a statewide organization, with a membership of some 500 people, a website, Twitter and Face book pages, a monthly newsletter and a major player in Tasmanian community engagement. We have put on six annual conferences, several smaller workshops and seminars, hosted the Dalai Lama during His Holiness’s only visit to our island, and helped motivate citizens to run (successfully) for office in state and local politics. We have been on the news several times, have had a voice on local, state and national radio and have also been in the print media. During 2012, we graced the cover of the Southern Tasmanian phonebook and have been the recipient of an environmental award as well as given several school awards. We have hosted politicians and other government and economic leaders and have been able to offer volunteer internships for students and social change thinkers. This is the legacy I will leave behind, as I plan my move from Tasmania later this year, but what a thrill it’s been.

It is hard to explain in one short article how this all happened, but I will say this, for those interested in making a difference:

What I feel is critical in bringing people together is to have a vision, to find like-minded people in the community who are respected, and to work with them in every way possible. Doug McKenzie-Mohr, a Canadian environmental psychologist who has studied what it takes to create change in communities for over 30 years, points out that the best way to create change is to firstly identify the community leaders.

These are not necessarily those with the most fancy cars or biggest houses, but rather those people in the community to whom everyone looks up and wants to emulate. Once those people are identified, if they can be convinced to change, then others will quickly follow suit! Thus, with social change movements, the first step is to identify these key players and go after them as catalysts of change.

The second important step is to create a sense of community identity—to find those people around you who have a similar sense of justice, and who have common interests, concerns, and so on. It is these people who may be able to in fact help work doggedly toward change. Such a group is known as “Samaja”.

What is samaja? It's a Sanskrit word that captures the concept of groups of like-minded people working together for social change, "marching of all together, inspired by the same ideology, towards a common goal" (Sarkar, Human Society, Part 1.) Usually, a samaja is created based on common socio-economic interests, and can include geographical boundaries, language, cultural and social customs. Such people are able to merge their socio-economic interests with those around them and work toward creating a common platform, or movement, for change.

It is on such an idea that an organization like "Future Tasmania" hinges. Though not everyone in the organization has the same exact goal or exact picture of what lies ahead, most members have a vision of a just society, with basic freedoms, socio-economic prosperity, natural beauty, safety, and all-round artistic, aesthetic and other pleasures.

Once such a group forms, offering the members a practical framework, such as cooperative models for running businesses, or models of effective and just governance, based on principles of ethics and fairness in alignment with those advocated by PROUT, transforms the society into the vision to which all can aspire.

Notes:

Sarkar, P. R. (1959). Human Society, Part 1. Calcutta: Ananda Marga Publications.

Lilla Hass is the Founding Director of Future Tasmania and a recent recipient of the Jan Lee Martin Scholarship, Melbourne University School of Business Executive Education. She is a graduate of the Tasmanian Leaders Program and has trained with Al Gore as a Climate Change activist.



Lilla Hass was featured in this photo on the cover of the Hobart White Pages® and Yellow Pages® in honor of her local work there to support the environment.



Asheville Green Drinks PROUT Presentation

On March 26th at the Asheville Green Drinks weekly forum at Green Sage Coffeehouse, Roar Bjonnes, J. Geoffrey Steen and Mirra Price gave a presentation about the Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT) to 28 participants.

Roar discussed economic restructuring to achieve a decentralized economy. Mirra addressed specific needs of marginalized groups to achieve full inclusion in the new economy. Geoff spoke about cooperative agriculture.

Presenters featured PROUTistic solutions to chronic unemployment, excessive private wealth accumulation, and gender, racial and psychological oppression. The workshop concluded with a discussion of policy implications that would guarantee everyone's minimum necessities as we explored next steps in our collective liberation from corporate greed and domination.

Mirra Price is a director of Proutist Women, an organization for the empowerment of women in society. She has been a Proutist for nearly 40 years, helping to organize projects and an economic democracy conference a year ago in Madison, Wisconsin. She is a retired English teacher who currently works part time as an editor and copyeditor.

Roar Bjonnes is co-founder of the Prama Institute, a holistic retreat center in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. He is a certified yoga health educator, a popular yoga columnist and a lecturer on yoga philosophy and history. He has been a Proutist for several decades, giving Prout presentations in the U.S. and Europe.

A graduate of Warren Wilson College, Geoffrey Steen has lived in Asheville eight years. He is a musician, and has a one-acre forest garden in Marshall near the Prama Institute where he and Roar Bjonnes are neighbors. He gladly shares his knowledge of Prout with others who are inspired by the mission for 'One People, One Planet, One Future'.

Biodiversity – Underprotected or Overprotected?

Continued from front cover

landscapes, biodiversity and animal habitats but they do not want to pay for it. They pressure Congress to pass laws compelling landowners to bear the financial brunt of maintaining ecological amenities. Landowners who bear almost the entire cost of protecting biodiversity solve the problem by having their land use changed from timber production to commercial or real estate development. In this scenario, if a landowner finds an endangered species on his property, it will be easier for him to simply shoot it and keep mum. It is a clear indication that our environmental laws need to be changed, so that all citizens share the cost protecting biodiversity.

In fact, urban residents who demand preservation of biodiversity in most cases do not put this into practice on their own properties. Instead of allowing natural flora and fauna to grow wild around their homes, they spend thousands of dollars purchasing synthetic fertilizers and pesticides to create an aesthetic, ecological desert around their homes. They support biodiversity in rural areas only so long as the cost burden falls on rural landowners and not themselves. Rather timberland owners shop provided financial incentives by the government to preserve ecological diversity on their properties.

In the timber industry, owners look for ways to harvest larger and larger amounts of timber on a smaller total acreage. However, these intensively managed forests, called plantation forests, are controlled, operated and regenerated by men and are treated with herbicides and pesticides along with occasional thinning and fire management. It has brought about substantial changes in diversity in these man-controlled plantation forests.

Underprotection of Biodiversity

On May 14, 1964, in the cloud forests of Monteverde, Costa Rica, biologist Jay Savage discovered the beautiful, pristine, golden toad. He named it *Bufo perigrinus*, or “brilliant toad.” Dr. Savage did not know that the ecosystem of Monteverde was about to be transformed, that due to global warming caused by human beings, the moisture-bearing clouds that provided ideal shelter for the golden



toad were going to rise up the mountain, leaving the toad unable to survive in the new, dryer climate. Dr. Savage did not realize that a mere 25 years later the golden toad would be gone from the face of the earth. [2] Its extinction is irreversible.

Biodiversity is crucial to human survival, and far greater efforts must get underway to preserve biodiversity.[3] When we lose particular species, when they become extinct, it affects the entire ecosystem. In addition, potential drugs that could cure modern diseases are lost forever. For this very reason, if human beings do not take care of all other life forms on our planet, it is the people themselves who will incur the greatest suffering as a consequence. While extinction of species is a normal process in nature, and while 99.9 percent of all species that once lived are now extinct, that process of extinction is a gradual one and therefore does not cause harm to those left behind. If extinction occurs in a natural gradual manner, there will be new species to replace the old through allopatric or sympatric speciation.[4] Disease, new predators, climate change, habitat loss and other factors cause the normal extinction of plant and animal life. However, what is happening today is something entirely different. Today it is the calculated actions of a few human beings – greedy capitalists for whom money is the summum bonum of life – that are causing havoc to our environment.

The unusually rapid destruction of biological diversity led the United States in 1973 to create the Endangered Species Act, expressly to protect those species that were in danger of extinction. The act banned construction projects in areas that would put particular species in danger of extinction.

An example would be the halting of construction of the Tellico Dam on the Little Tennessee River in Tennessee, only because it threatened the survival of the little snail darter fish. Logging in the Northwest was halted in certain areas as it threatened to render the spotted owl extinct.[5]

Those who support protection of each and every species say that when one species goes, others interlinked with that species will also vanish. As of November 2000, the number of threatened species numbered 1,244. International law likewise supports protection of biodiversity, as covered by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). This agreement banned trade in elephant ivory (to stop the rampant slaughter of elephants), rhinoceros horns, and banned trade in more than 5,000 other species of animals and 25,000 species of plants. Examples are primates, whales, dolphins, porpoises, sea turtles, parrots, corals, cacti and orchids. Hence at both the national and international level, citizens have met and passed laws banning construction and trade that threatens the loss of biodiversity on earth.

Another example on the part of environmentalists would be their movement to tear down dams[6] that block the path of migratory fish, such as salmon and shad. Still another example would be how urbanization and agricultural development have permanently altered the everglades of Florida by way of straightened rivers, diverted water and land drained and now used as farmland. These actions have resulted in lowering the water table, increasing the danger of fires, resulting in a greatly decreased bird population and a marked decline in the Florida panther. At present moves are underway to undo some of the damage caused by so-called development of the everglades. In 2000 Congress approved \$8 billion for a 30 year project to restore the everglades to their earlier pristine condition.

Vandana Shiva, in speaking of bioterrorism and biosafety, points out that the real bioterrorism is when IMF, WB and WTO try to legislate their super control of local biodiversity in places like India. It is when they compel countries to implement structural adjustment and single cash crops that lead to real devastation and destruction of biodiversity.

Shiva gives two primary causes for the global, large-scale destruction of biodiversity. The first cause is habitat destruction due to internationally financed mega-projects such as huge dams and highways as well as mining operations in biologically rich tropical forests. The second cause is the technological and economic push to “replace diversity with homogeneity in forestry, agriculture, fisheries and animal husbandry. The Green Revolution in agriculture, the White Revolution in dairying and the Blue Revolution in fisheries are based on the deliberate replacement of

[biodiversity with bio-uniformity.]”[7] These two global trends led by mega-corporations and mega-organizations, appears nearly unstoppable.

The citizens’ movement for biosafety, including the imperative to study and regulate genetically modified seeds and plants into the environment, led to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in February, 2000, where delegates created a Protocol on Biosafety.[8] In 2004, however, the US in particular has witnessed 300 major roll-backs of US environmental laws by the Bush administration, which is already having egregious effects on the air, water, public lands and wildlife. For example, in his unabashed support of factory farm corporate owners, millions of tons of untreated fecal and toxic wastes are strewn onto public lands and into public water. This corporate pollution has thrown thousands of family farmers and fishermen out of work, killed billions of fish, caused undiagnosed illnesses among consumers and meted out unbounded cruelties to the animals living in those factories.[9]

According to E.O. Wilson, while actions of human beings can be reversed, once a species of plant or animal is extinct, there is no reversal. It is gone forever. Human beings can drastically reduce their pollution of the atmosphere, soil and water, control ozone depletion and global warming. However, Wilson predicts the loss of 20 percent of the earth’s species over the next 30 years. As he points out, “... each species is a masterpiece of evolution and ... has been evolving into its present state for thousands to millions of years....To wipe out species at the rate we are now ... [means] to increase the extinction rate by between a hundred and a thousand times.”[10]

A stunning example demonstrating the critical essentiality of maintaining all biodiversity was the discovery of Calophyllum lanigerum inside a small tree in Sarawak, Borneo. This substance was discovered to successfully combat the



AIDS virus by stopping the disease in its tracks. When biologists returned to Borneo to collect more samples, the tree was gone. It took days of searching before they found another tree of the same species. It was a rare tree bordering on extinction.

Wilson blames the destruction of natural resources on people's drive for unlimited consumption, fueled by the capitalist dictate that consumption is the highest value. He further points out that while in the US 12 acres are required to support food production for one person, in third world countries it is one acre. However, third world countries are today keen to become second and first world countries. Where are the natural resources to support this endeavor of increasing their ecological footprint? Wilson says we need to make immediate efforts to preserve the ecological hot spots of the world – those places housing huge numbers of plants and animals that are found nowhere else on earth. Examples would be Hawaii, Madagascar, Ecuador, Brazil, the western ghats of India, the Himalayas and even coral reefs. The 1992 Earth Summit Convention on Biological Diversity possibly slowed down the destruction somewhat[11], but powerful capitalists are relentless in their drive for profit and indifferent to loss of biodiversity.

Another reason why biodiversity fails to be properly protected is because laws are passed at the national level (what to speak of the international level by bodies such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization).

The protection of biodiversity must be done at the local level, with laws passed by the local people and the burden shared by those local people. In other words, we need localization, not centralization, of laws in place for protecting biodiversity. Biodiversity must be maintained because the flora and fauna and animals may hold cures for diseases such as AIDS, Alzheimer's and arthritis.

However, suppose plants contained no cures, suppose these flora and fauna had no practical use for human beings. What should be our attitude then towards their preservation? The neo-humanist ecologist, Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, says two things: (1) human beings have neglected ecology at every step. It is disastrous for the simple reason that all of creation – the rivers, mountains, the air and water, wild animals, reptiles, birds and fish, and plants are all inseparably intertwined into one common society. If one part of that society is extinguished, the other parts will not be able to survive.[12] Hence the greatest folly of human beings is to destroy the biodiversity that is everywhere around them. (2) Neo-humanist philosophy says that all created beings have value. If a life force has no utilitarian value it nevertheless has existential value. It has the

right to exist. It is called love for all created beings of the universe.[13] For these two reasons alone, it is inconceivable to continue to allow the wanton destruction of biological diversity around the world.

Notes

- [1] David N. Laband, "Regulating Biodiversity: Tragedy in the Political Commons," in *Ideas on Liberty*, September 2001.
- [2] Scott Brennan & Jay Withgott, *Environment: The Science Behind the Stories*, San Francisco, Pearson Education, Inc. 2005, p. 128.
- [3] E.O. Wilson, "Why Biodiversity Matters," interview with Kris Christen, *OECD Observer*, Summer 2001.
- [4] Scott Brennan & Jay Withgott, *Environment: The Science Behind the Stories*, San Francisco, Pearson Education, Inc. 2005, p. 123-125.
- [5] According to Northern Kentucky University Biology Professor Charles Acosta, both of these projects have proceeded and the species exempted from the ESA provisions because of the "greater good" of the projects. These are probably the worst examples of the impact of the ESA in modern times, says Acosta.
- [6] This and other actions by environmentalists have not been effective at all.
- [7] Vandana Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives in Biodiversity and Biotechnology*, London: Zed Books, 1997, p. 68.
- [8] Vandana Shiva, "Bioterror and Biosafety," p. 75.
- [9] Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., *Crimes Against Nature*, New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 2004, p. 3,7.
- [10] E.O. Wilson, "Why Biodiversity Matters," Interview with Kris Christen, *OECD Observer*, Summer 2001.
- [11] Hard evidence is not there to back up this statement.
- [12] Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, *Neo-Humanism in a Nutshell: Part II*, Calcutta: Ananda Marga Publications, 1991, p. 62.
- [13] Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, *The Liberation of Intellect: Neo-Humanism*, Calcutta, Ananda Marga Publications, 1999, p. 6.

Garda Ghista (1944-2012) was a prolific writer who published numerous academic and revolutionary articles, as well as books on PROUT founder P.R. Sarkar, wife abuse, and The Gujarat Genocide available at Amazon.com.



Two Strategies for Getting the Word Out About PROUT

By Dada Maheshvaranda, Director of the Prout Research Institute in Venezuela

Narada in Ireland sent a copy of my book, *After Capitalism: Economic Democracy in Action*, to the president of the country, who he knew was a poet and sociologist with very progressive views, though they had never met. A personal thank you note was followed by the gift of another Prout book, *Principles of a Balanced Economy* by Roar Bjornes. After two more notes, Narada asked me to fly to Dublin for a week to meet the president with him.

President Michael D. Higgins is a very wise and gracious man. During our one-hour conversation in the presidential residence, he said repeatedly, "This is a remarkable book that deserves wide circulation." He introduced us to Ruairí McKiernan, a member of his privy council, who then organized a talk for me in a downtown Dublin hotel for 50 activists. The president also suggested we meet the leaders of the trade union SIPTU which has 200,000 members—they published a review about Prout in the March issue of their magazine, *Liberty*.

If you would like to try this strategy, mailing a copy of the book to a progressive politician, journalist or other social leader with a personal letter from you, please contact me at maheshvarananda@prout.org.ve. The worst that could happen is the book is ignored; on the other hand it might be read and it could even gain publicity for Prout.

I then landed in New York City and started a four-week tour of six college campuses: Nichols College (Dudley, MA), American University (Washington, DC), Warren Wilson College (Asheville, NC), Virginia Tech (Blacksburg, VA), Radford University (Radford, VA) and Indiana State University (Terre Haute, IN). I also spoke at three high school classes in Bethesda, MD, Rainbow Cooperative Bookstore (Madison, WI), Multikulti (Chicago, IL), the Unitarian Church (Terre Haute, IN), and I did one TV, one newspaper and five radio interviews.

Before each high school and college class, I pass out slips of paper and ask the students to please write down their



Dada Maheshvaranda with Michael D. Higgins, president of the Republic of Ireland.

feedback and return it to me at the end. I believe this is having an impact because I've received hundreds of these notes, 99 percent of which are positive, that say things like: "I love the idea of Prout. I really like this revolutionary quote: 'The most powerful weapon on Earth is the soul on fire.'... I think if we keep focusing on what you said, we can absolutely change the world. We needed a reminder of why love, peace and helping others are important... The world needs more people like you... This makes me want to start meditating again..."

Contacting teachers in colleges and high schools and offering to speak to their classes is another strategy for introducing Prout to young people. When talking to students I would encourage you to:

- tell a bit of your personal story of how and why you got involved
- share some information that most people don't know about cooperatives, economic inequality, etc.
- explain why the struggle for social justice and meditation complement each other
- convey how much potential they really have, individually and collectively
- include links for further information.

Come see our website:

www.proutwomen.org

Or Facebook us at:

Women Proutists of North America

Red Barn Community Farm and Organic Gardening

By Doris Olivers

Red Barn Community Farm is growing, and is in its fourth year of operation. Last year we gave 7000 pounds of food to our local VOA food bank. I was one of the founders of a community farm in Everett, Washington. We assist the community plot farmers with food production strategies and questions, and I give classes each season.

This year we partnered with the Snohomish County Conservation District who promoted two classes that I taught at the public library. I focus on good practice in food production and responsible stewardship. I share information on appropriate crops to the climate and season, crop rotation, proper spacing of plantings, fertilizers and give good handouts to help people to be successful growers. The Conservation District has also helped organize our public work parties where we grow crops for the food bank. As a group we endeavor to lead the volunteers in the preparation, planting, and harvesting of the food bank crops.

I am currently in the Horticulture program at Edmonds Community College studying in a program funded by the National Science Foundation for sustainable urban agriculture. I currently study permaculture. Last quarter was agroecology. I have grown organic veggies since the 1960s and have been a part of this movement since then. I have studied organics, healthy soil, heirloom seeds, local food, the international food system, and industrial agriculture and its contribution to greenhouse gases.

I also specialize in winter production made possible by our maritime climate. We now grow more in hoop houses that give the plants some protection. I am a Sustainable Community Steward and have developed curricula for community conversation circles to enable participants to understand to impacts of food choices on increasing carbon in the atmosphere. I compare sustainable local food to industrial agriculture.

I have found a great group of folks who perform service to community. This is a story about the “we” of community. We have many people working to make our local food systems viable.

Dayabati Doris Olivers has been a Margii and Proutist since 1971 and lives in Washington State.

