

A Proposal for a Green Tea Party: Putting Together a Winning 3rd Party Coalition



Michael Pilarski
Friends of the Trees Society
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www.friendsofthetrees.net
www.facebook.com/michael.skeeter.pilarski

A couple months ago I started talking about the idea of building a coalition between the greens and the tea party. A friend suggested it be called the green tea party. A quick search on the internet shows the name “Green Tea Party” is already being used on a number of websites and may be copyrighted. Besides nobody would want it for the name of a coalition. The use of the term “green tea party” here is just a temporary use. I imagine there are other people out there talking about this idea. I am certainly not crazy enough to actually try to start a political party like this. I want somebody else to do it.

Easier said than done, you might say. Impossible some would say. But I think it is worth pursuing the idea.

[I don’t capitalize tea party in this article in case anyone has got “Tea Party” copyrighted. I am not talking about any particular organization (of which there are many), but rather the whole movement. Similarly my use of the word “greens” here has nothing to do with any official Green parties.]

First, the coalition would have to be based on issues/policies. What common policies can people broadly agree on? Neither the tea party nor the greens are monolithic blocks. They both encompass a wide range of beliefs. Greens is not a term I especially like as it is limiting. I like the term progressives, but I also like a lot of the values of true conservatives. They are not the same as Liberals. I like the term “Cultural Creatives” but it has too many syllables and sounds high falutin. So I’ll use the term greens for now. The Republicans and Democrats are not monolithic blocks either. People are much more bipartisan than the media leads us to believe.

What are some policies that a green tea party might agree on?

- Less big government. More local control.
- Reduce the role of government in life.
- Balance the budget.
- Rich people and corporations pay their share fair of taxes. People are outraged at the huge profits and salaries of Wall Street and big multinationals while almost everyone else suffers.
- Strong family values, volunteerism, contribution to society.
- Take care of the environment.

- Stop overseas wars and reduce military bases overseas.
- Allow and assist locally-owned businesses and worker-owned cooperatives.

These are just a few ideas that appeal to me. Everyone can draw up their own wish list. Build on policies that have a wide appeal.

Ron Paul's presidential campaign in 2008 is an example of what might be possible. In the early televised debates of Republican candidates, Ron Paul was declared the winner in public opinion polls. Ron Paul appealed to the tea party folks, many of whom typically vote Republican. But Ron Paul, also appealed strongly to the young and they kept up a lively internet campaign even after Ron Paul lost the Republican nomination to McCain. A lot of people who could loosely be called greens were working for Ron Paul.

Some of Ron Paul's platforms

- Abolish the Federal Reserve
- Stop the Iraq and Afghanistan wars
- Close all overseas military bases and bring all the troops home
- Repeal of the Patriot Act
- Lower spending and smaller government
- Lower taxes
- Balance the budget
- End the "war on drugs"
- Allow gay marriage

I live in Okanogan county in eastern Washington. Eastern Washington has voted solidly Republican for decades. Ron Paul won the presidential primaries in eastern Washington by a large margin with twice the votes of either McCain or Obama. Ron Paul was the people's choice for president. A bit of research shows that Ron Paul would have carried the election in almost all of the West. But after his rapid beginning, mainstream media gave him scant coverage and the "Republican Party Machine" sidelined him in favor of insider, John McCain,

One wonders what would have happened if Ron Paul would have run as an independent and really stirred up a lot of grass-roots organizing? A real 3rd party choice compared to the Democrats and Republications. He could have carried the West but elsewhere in the country he would have faced a formidable opponent in Barack Obama.

So what can happen in 2012? What if Ron Paul ran with someone like Dennis Kucinich as vice president? The tea party rallies behind Ron Paul and the greens rally behind Kucinich. By mid-term, Obama has disappointed many of his followers. Some things may have improved, but it looks like business as usual.

There is a strong desire by Americans to get rid of political corruption and the power of corporate lobbying in Washington DC and state capitals. Democrat and Republican congressmen (and congress women) talk a lot about their partisanship and publicly fight a lot, but when it comes to decision-making most of them look equally corrupt.

A lot of people are so apathetic about politics that they have stopped voting. This is particularly true for the bottom 20% of the population. (Bottom in economic terms, not necessarily in terms of happiness or quality of life). This includes the growing ranks of homeless, many elderly on fixed incomes, minorities, long-term welfare recipients, youth, long-term unemployed and the bottom rung of the working poor. Most of these people don't vote. Of those who do there are many who would consider themselves as greens and some who are sympathetic to the tea party. A real 3-party race would increase the percentage of these people who vote and they would vote pretty solidly for a 3rd party. My hat is off to the people who are serving this bottom 20% on the economic ladder. I think they are one of the great untapped (or little-tapped) resources of our times. How to unleash their potential? Self-organization and collective intelligence.

Getting greens and tea bag folks to work together sounds like a tall order. Some terms which come to mind are "cobble together a coalition" or "an uneasy alliance". There are basic differences as well as similarities. First we must get past the smoke and mirrors propaganda of the mainstream media. One of the corporate media's jobs is to try to discredit any person or group who presents a real threat to the status quo power structure. So of course, they say lots of bad things about the tea bag movement as well as about the greens. They try to stir up distrust and conflict. Divide and conquer. The tea party movement does not have a coherent, agreed-upon platform. In some ways it is just a catch-all bag for people who are pissed at the government and Wall Street and who see the tea party as a way to express their anger and get things changed.

Some common stereotypes of tea party folks:

- Racist
- Strongly anti-immigration
- Fundamentalist Christians
- Slavishly follow Sarah Palin. (I think the media is more enamored of Sarah Palin than many tea party folks are).
- Want to return to the good old days
- Want the American Empire to continue to police the world. Would not think of cutting the military budget.
- Are easily led around by would-be dictators who shout the right slogans
- Are owned by the Republican Party Machine. The Republicans love to say that the tea party folks belong to them..

Some common stereotypes of the green folks:

- Keep pushing for more government regulations.
- Support laws that reduce individual freedom and property rights.
- Are insensitive to people who work in the natural resource industries, ranching, farming, mining, and workers in general.
- Are dupes of the financial elites who are seeking a one-world government.
- Are irreligious, have rejected a spiritual life or are some sort of weird pagan.
- Are immoral, sexually permissive and/or associated with illegal drugs.
- Are owned by the Democratic Party Machine. The Democrats love to say that the green folks belong to them.

This is just a short list of stereotypes off the top of my head. Send in your nominations for stereotypes to add to this list. We could also make stereotype lists for Republicans and Democrats which would have similarities and differences to the above. There are individuals who match some of the stereotypes above, but reality is far more complex and nuanced.

If people can get beyond the stereotypes and actually talk to each other I think they will find many commonalities and that a coalition is somehow possible. Certainly there will be difference and they should not be papered over. The best thing is to elucidate the differences as clearly as possible and then agree to disagree. Voting out our common enemy is more important than fighting each other. The various parts of the coalition can always fight over the details after the people take back control of their government.

Modernists, Heartlanders and Cultural Creatives

For those of you who don't know the work of Paul Ray, here is a short introduction. The following quotes are from David C. Korten's, 1999 book "*The Post-Corporate World: Life After Capitalism*", Kumarian Press. I highly recommend Korten's book and his website livingeconomiesforum.org for anyone studying new economic models.

"... Paul Ray, a values researcher based in California has been a leading figure in compiling and popularizing survey data gathered in the United States that reveal the growing momentum behind a shift to a new integral culture that affirms life in all its dimensions"

"Ray identifies three major cultural groupings in the United States: the *Modernists*, who embrace dominant mainstream materialist values; the *Heartlanders*, who reject modernism in favor of more traditional values of premodernism; and the transmodern *Cultural Creatives*, who have rejected modernism in favor of the values of an integral culture.

- The Modernists actively prize materialism and the drive to acquire money and property. They tend to spend beyond their means, take a cynical view of idealism and caring relations, and value winners.
- Heartlanders are distinguished by their desire to return to traditional ways of life and traditional gender roles. They tend toward religious conservatism and fundamentalism. They believe in helping others, volunteering, creating and maintaining caring relationships, and working to create a better society.
- Cultural Creatives have a strong commitment to family, community, the environment, internationalism, and feminism. They have a well-developed social consciousness and are optimistic. They are interested in alternative health-care practices, personal growth and spiritual development and they are careful, thoughtful consumers." [Yep, sounds like me.]

"Ray's surveys estimate that among the adult U.S. Population 47% or eighty-eight million people are Modernists. 29% or fifty-six million are Heartlanders and 24% or forty-four million are Cultural Creatives. Although the Cultural Creatives are a minority compared with the Modernists, they are far greater in numbers than even

they themselves realize. Because neither the media nor the political system takes note of their existence, they tend to be invisible even to themselves. Even so, their numbers are growing rapidly.”

Ray breaks the Modernists into several subsets. ‘Alienated Modernists’ may play the modernist game but basically reject all the values and worldviews examined in his study. ‘Titular Modernists’ play by modernism’s rules and strive for success by modernism’s definition, yet they also yearn for spiritual and psychological meaning and for the security of traditional religious beliefs. This only leaves thirty-three million ‘Solid Modernists’.

Now whether you agree with Paul Ray’s categories or not, this demonstrates the type of useful analyses we might do to determine what kind of coalition platform is likely to produce a 3rd party that wins elections. The link between what I am calling ‘greens’ and what Ray calls Cultural Creatives is obvious. There is also a good correlation between the tea party folks and Ray’s Heartlanders. A coalition between the Heartlanders, Cultural Creatives and Titular Modernists would win national elections. One population group that I don’t see in Ray’s analysis is the ‘disenfranchised’ which I estimate would be at least 10% of the population (a subset of the bottom 20% on the economic ladder I mentioned earlier in this article) They are mostly apolitical and I don’t see how they fit into any of Ray Paul’s categories.

Well after reading this article I imagine that most of you still think it is a crazy idea and that I am a wild-eyed idealist. Some of you may be mad at me. My apologies to any tea party folks (or greens) who are offended by my article or choice of words. I am a bumbling novice at communicating across the fence.

Michael Pilarski

PS. Does anyone know where I can refer people to in case someone should actually inquire about getting involved in something like this?