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## WHICH IS THE MOST IDIOTIC GREEN PARTY IN THE WORLD?

### Tim Murray

*Which of the world's prominent green parties is the most foolish? In this opinion piece the author, a Canadian, surveys some promising candidates. But he also finds a winner for a different contest, the model of what a green party should be: the Green Party of New Zealand.*

The deadline is fast approaching. Send in your submissions now. The first annual contest to establish which indeed is the most idiotic of the world's Green Parties is upon us. Many candidates were surveyed. The Swedes, the nutty Germans and Brits, the hypocritical Canadians and Australians and even the Green Party of the United States along with some of its discordant constituent parts. The competition for lunacy is fierce. Here are but a few of the contestants.

First, let me present as my personal favourites, Canada's Greens. Their leader, Elizabeth May, argues that we should reduce our individual ecological footprint but at the same time import 300,000 more 'footprints' each year just to strengthen our 'cultural diversity'. This 'Great Multicultural Project' as she calls it, of course takes precedence over any project to protect biological diversity or constrain greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which her 300,000 incoming footprints will increase. The Canadian Greens are a masterpiece of contradictions and confusion. Ontario leader Frank de Jong told us privately that Canada is overpopulated by a factor of 'four to ten'. Yet he told others, including an Australian audience, that 'population is a red herring'. Now recently, on 30 January 2008, he made the incredible assertion that 'a higher population means a higher quality of life'.<sup>1</sup> Economic growth is no problem either. The size of the economy can increase ten fold,

he maintains, and only 'through-put' matters. The party stands for Green taxes. Down with those antiquated fair and progressive income and capital gains taxes. But some party officials like Eric Walton are waking up to the fact that low income Canadians aren't buying it. He now favours a hybrid mix of progressive and green taxes so that the poor don't pay the shot for punishing polluters and shifting to renewable technologies. That's the Canadians.<sup>2</sup> Let's take a quick peek at other Green hypocrites.

The British Green Party, at first blush, offers a radical departure in consciousness from its Canadian counterparts with this promise: 'To promote debate on sustainable population levels for the UK, to include consideration of consumption and material comfort'.<sup>3</sup> But then they say that: 'Richer regions and communities do not have the right to use migration controls to protect their privileges from others in the long term'. Note that the first statement calls only for a debate, as the population skyrockets, because 'the aim is to increase awareness of the issues—not to set specific population targets'. In their migration policy the UK Greens acknowledge an impending human tsunami by saying that: 'there is likely to be mass migration of people escaping from the consequences of global warming, environmental degradation, resource shortage and population increase'.<sup>4</sup> So how do they propose to respond to this, besides of course to work for a fairer world that

would lessen the urge to migrate? ‘We will progressively reduce UK immigration controls’.<sup>5</sup>

They will do that in a multitude of ways. ‘Families will not be divided by deportation’.<sup>6</sup> ‘We will abolish the “primary purpose” rule under which partners are refused entry if it is thought that the primary purpose of the relationship is for them to gain entry to the UK’.<sup>7</sup> And ‘Migrants illegally in the UK for over five years will be allowed to remain unless they pose a serious danger to public safety’.<sup>8</sup>

The British Greens will also ‘resist all attempts to introduce a “barrier around Europe” shutting out non-Europeans or giving them more restricted rights of movement within Europe than European nationals’.<sup>9</sup> And finally they have this to say about human trafficking: ‘The Government should grant a temporary right to stay in the country to anyone who has been trafficked or appears to have been trafficked. It should also recognize the right of those who have been trafficked to apply for a longer term or permanent immigrant status’.<sup>10</sup> With shameless invective, it labels as ‘racists of the far right’ all those persons in the United Kingdom and Europe who favour increased immigration controls.

The population of the United Kingdom, an island nation of 60 million acres, is currently 61 million and rising rapidly. It is obvious that under a Green Party administration, it would soon be 71 or 81 million barring an international resource or environmental crisis, in which event it would be even higher. What consumption levels would Britons have to tumble down to then to achieve sustainability?

But let us save the best to last. After spending much time talking about the need for family planning,<sup>11</sup> they declare that: ‘The Green Party holds that the number of children people have should be a matter of free choice’.<sup>12</sup> That is brilliant. You need a licence to catch a certain number of fish and

a driver’s licence to operate a car within a certain speed limit but you can go ahead and have five kids on the dole and have them dump 100 metric tonnes of GHG per year into the atmosphere because it’s your free choice. Yet polluters would no doubt face tough restrictions under a Green regime.

The Irish Greens similarly project an image not of an environmental party but of a party obsessed with human rights. Not once in their dense 13-page document on immigration policy do they mention carrying capacity or the ecological impact of all the asylum-seekers and immigrants that they want Ireland to embrace.<sup>13</sup> They state that: ‘The Green Party opposes any common asylum policy for the European Union which results in more restrictions on asylum-seeking or in reducing rights for refugees ... [and] We strongly condemn the trend whereby the European Union is becoming a fortress on whose borders there are people dying in the hands of traffickers’.<sup>14</sup> The Greens denounced the Immigration Bill of 2004 as ‘flawed on account of the negative tone of the language used in it and the basic lack of provisions for family re-unification for non-nationals’.<sup>15</sup> In this party’s opinion effective integration of immigrants and their families is best promoted by granting them citizenship. But why does Ireland need immigrants?

Economic orthodoxy provides the standard answer. In the words of an Irish Green Party policy statement: ‘The Central Statistics Office, in their report for 2006–36, suggests the State will continue to rely on strong inward migration to maintain economic growth. It forecasts that the economy will need 45,000 immigrant workers every year for the next 12 years to sustain economic growth’. And then the Irish Greens pull out the old chestnut that, since those over 65 will in 2036 ‘comprise one fifth of the population rather than one tenth’, it is important that ‘a progressive [sic]

immigration policy will be in this country to ensure that the economy will be able to fund the necessary pension schemes, health and educational facilities into the future'.<sup>16</sup>

The Irish Green Party, then, fully buys into the gospel of economic growth and the myth of immigration as a cure for an ageing population. Without debating the profound vacuity of their ideology, it is best simply to refer them to authors Richard Douthwaite, Herman Daly and Phil Mullan. Case closed. In declaring that, 'as a rapidly developing economy, Ireland needs migrant workers to provide essential skills and services', the Greens concede the game before it begins. They accept the necessity of a 'rapidly developing economy', not thinking that on-going economic growth will create labour shortages that, once filled, will generate the growth that demands more immigrant labour. And this mad spiral will degrade the quality of life and despoil the environment—which is what a Green Party is supposed to be about, isn't it? That is, when it isn't defending gay rights, migrant mothers' rights, handicapped rights, Ethiopian rights, in other words the full panoply of identity politics.

The Irish Greens are also concerned that immigrants 'are not simply labeled as economic entities, while denying them social and cultural rights'. The Irish public must be brainwashed into accepting the important role of immigration in Irish society, 'on the changing nature of Irish national identity', and on a universal Green theme: 'the value of cultural diversity'. Borrowing from the Canadian handbook on social engineering, they advocate 'cultural sensitivity for public sector workers'.<sup>17</sup> The concept that maybe immigrants should learn to be sensitive to the customs of the host country is a theme universally absent from Green thinking.

One could find it ironic that all across Canada, particularly Atlantic Canada, there are clubs and associations dedicated to

keeping Celtic culture alive. And yet, in the heart of Celtic culture, you have an Irish government that has quickly allowed one in seven of its residents to be from another country and where at least one political party, the Greens, promotes the fragmentation of that culture by its support for multiculturalism and the economic growth which drew immigrants in in the first place. One wonders why the Irish spent centuries spilling blood to get the British out only to invite the East Europeans in. So much for Sinn Fein: 'Ourselves Alone'. Raised on Irish Nationalist folklore, you can't fathom my sense of betrayal.

The Swedish and German Greens duplicate the same trademark idiocies of their sister parties.<sup>18</sup> Though one must admit that the German Greens in the former coalition voting to shut down their nuclear program so that they could turn around and buy natural gas from Mr Putin displayed an astonishing ignorance about the relative risks of nuclear and natural gas relative to their impact on global warming. Once again, a steady state economic model was not considered as an alternative to natural gas consumption.

A look across the globe yields no surprises. The Australian Greens, for example, believe that 'our environmental impact is not determined by population numbers alone, but by the way that people live'.<sup>19</sup> Notice that they did not say, 'our environmental impact is not determined simply by the way people live, but by population numbers'. The Aussies are to be congratulated for being able to utter the word 'population', but like their global comrades, it would kill them to put the stress on it. Over-consumption is the name of the game. And in constructing a population policy, should not 'ecological sustainability' be the governing factor, unmitigated by a series of other points like 'multiculturalism' (shades of Elizabeth May) and 'humanitarian migration' which the Greens

say Australia has 'an obligation to accept, including climate change refugees?'<sup>20</sup>

If so, then, how many? Ten million? 20? 30? Your country is a lifeboat and metaphorically speaking it has a carrying capacity of 20 people. Period. Whether you think you have a moral obligation to haul another 20 refugees on board because they are righteous, their cause is just, or they would afford your lifeboat more diversity is immaterial to the laws of physics, which state that your craft will sink under that weight.

The trouble with the Australian Green Party is that, like the others, it cannot decide if it is an environmentalist party or a human rights party. Its policy statement on population and immigration should be shortened by 13 points to read concisely: 'Australia's population policy should be determined by its commitment to ecological sustainability'. The environment before people. The boat before its passengers.

The Green Party of the United States places the same priority on human rights as do other Green parties.<sup>21</sup> A Californian Green Party policy direction document states bluntly that: 'immigration policies should be based strongly on human rights'.<sup>22</sup> Not on carrying capacity or sustainability or peak oil or climate change or biodiversity collapse but human rights. The rights of wildlife in the United States to survive runaway immigrant-driven population growth for this anthropocentric 'Green' Party is given no mention. Instead, in a press release of 23 May 2007 the Green Party of the United States called on Congress to enact immigration legislation that will protect human rights and 'facilitate the path to citizenship' of the 25 to 35 million undocumented immigrants in the country, who must of course be given amnesty,<sup>23</sup> the universal theme song of the Green movement. The Greens of New Mexico harmonize with that position in their immigration policy document: 'We must

continue to respect the potential contributions and rights of other new immigrants'.<sup>24</sup>

The Iowa Green Party goes further. They argue for 'an authentic free-trade zone where people are free to travel for work', and invoke Cesar Chavez, as many soft greens and liberals do, as an advocate of this position.<sup>25</sup> In fact Chavez, a Mexican-American farm worker and civil rights activist, was a strident advocate of immigration restriction in defence of the working conditions of Mexican-Americans and stood on the border to guard against illegal entrants. The foundation of the Iowa party's attitude on immigration is found in a statement that could have been lifted from the policy book of virtually any Green party in the world: 'Those living in the industrialized world must end the habits of waste and over-consumption that place as much as stress on the environment as does population growth in developing nations'. Consumption, consumption, consumption. Bring on the immigrant millions. After all, 'we are all the same people, and need to break down those psychological barriers, not re-enforce them'. We are the same, yes, but we are also 'diverse' at the same time and this diversity must be celebrated and amplified, like it or not. The host culture is of little account in Greendom.

The best way to celebrate diversity of course is to offer tantamount support to an 80 per cent immigrant-driven population growth rate in California which is growing at two per cent per year, nearly twice the national rate of 1.1 per cent. If unchecked the state's population will double to 64 million by 2035 and another 32 per cent of its 100 million acres will have to be devoted to urbanization and highways. If the population continues to grow, per capita agricultural land will be reduced to approximately half of what it is today, and in 33 years about half of California's cropland will be unavailable. Currently the

state must build 250,000 housing units yearly and one school per day just to keep pace with growth and it is already 40 per cent more densely populated than Europe. This is the state which, under the leadership of Governor Arnold Schwarzeneger, Canadians believe is so environmentally progressive because of his initiatives to reduce GHG. There is not one jurisdiction in the world that has accomplished that in the context of rapid, unchecked population growth.

In the face of these facts all the California Green Party can do is issue a statement referring to those who favour greater restrictions on immigration as being 'xenophobic' and 'reactionary'. (Let us hope they choke on that statement when they are paying 50 per cent of their income on food in 2035.) In response to questions about immigration, an activist for Californians for Population Stabilization (CAPS) replied: 'We're not concerned about who is coming here, but simply the number. It is not a matter of condemning those people who have come here, but looking at resources and asking how many people this land can support with what kind of lifestyle'. It appears that CAPS is the authentic 'Green Party' in California.<sup>26</sup>

And we don't even have to worry about developing countries either. The tonic for overpopulation is, you guessed it, 'economic growth'. The California Greens conscript the old, discredited Theory of Demographic Transition to say that: 'Current global demographics demonstrate that economic well-being promotes low birthrates'.<sup>27</sup> (No, but it does promote GHG emissions and habitat loss.) Its amazing that this 72 year old theory still enjoys currency.

So there are the nominees for idiocy. The Canadians, the British, the Irish, the Australians and the Americans. The list is by no means inclusive. You might provide better examples of idiotic parties with outrageously contradictory policies. But

lets examine the Green parties that were disqualified from the contest on the grounds of sanity.

The Green Party of Missouri states that: 'Because human impact is now beyond a sustainable level, we must take immediate action to reduce population growth. Our goal is zero population growth in our country as soon as possible'.<sup>28</sup> The Green Party of Minnesota: 'We support efforts toward zero or negative human population growth. Overpopulation combined with the resource demands and waste production of modern lifestyles are root causes of environmental degradation'.<sup>29</sup> The Green Party of Hawaii says flatly: 'Population growth must cease. We need carrying capacity studies for all counties to determine development limits'.<sup>30</sup> Hawaii suffered 2.4 per cent annual population growth from 1970 to 1986 overwhelmingly due to immigration. It is no wonder that the state elected the first legislator on record to openly declare support for a steady state economy, Senator David Hemmings.

Now the best is left to last. The model of a what Green Party can and should be. The Green Party of New Zealand. Their six-page Population Policy statement takes the sensible approach.<sup>31</sup> It begins with an estimate of what population level New Zealand can sustain, based on the Ministry of Environment's footprint analysis. In 1998 that figure was 5.7 million, but the Green Party treats it with caution, as 'an indicative upper limit figure only', for it recognises that unforeseen contingencies like the peak oil crisis, climate change refugees, war or the sudden return of 750,000 expatriate New Zealanders, for example, should make government provide for 'spare capacity'. And 'in order to maintain both spare capacity and a decent standard of living, the optimum population figure will be significantly lower than the maximum carrying capacity of the land'.

So while Greens the world over feel compelled to fill up the demographic tank right away and keep it full, New Zealand Greens evidence prudence and an understanding of future calamity and existing overshoot. Points 2 and 3 of their 'Key Principles' state that: 'A self-sustaining population cannot be increased beyond the carrying capacity of useable land available' and 'The population cannot be increased beyond its capacity to offset its greenhouse emissions'.

Alas, the Greens of New Zealand, Missouri, Minnesota and Hawaii are the renegades of the movement, the exceptions to the rule. In most cases, your local 'Green' Party is a misnomer. It is a name designed to attract the environmentalist constituency but its focus is not really on the environment, but on human rights. The rights of migrants take precedence over their environmental impact, an impact which Greens won't even acknowledge.

On the basis of this global tour of Green parties, a provisional international manifesto of generic Green-ness is hereby offered as a guide to their cosmology:

#### **INTERNATIONAL MANIFESTO OF GENERIC GREEN-NESS**

1. Over-consumption counts for everything. Over-population counts for nothing. Environmental degradation is one-dimensional.
2. Over-population is a global problem, so let's not try to stabilize our own.
3. Renewable technologies and greener lifestyles will save the day.
4. We are committed to sustainability—and growth—at the same time.

5. Growth can be rendered ecologically benign if channeled, managed or deflected.
6. We share the consensus for the need for economic growth, therefore we favour liberal immigration. There is always a chronic labour shortage, isn't there, and oh, don't undocumented migrants make such a contribution to our society?
7. Since we favour liberal immigration that is non-discriminatory, then we favour an aggressive multicultural strategy for the integration of migrants. We reject the concept of a national culture.
8. We place far greater emphasis on climate change than biodiversity collapse even though more species will be lost sooner to human overpopulation than to global warming, which is not as imminent or as catastrophic as the loss of biodiversity services.
9. We will only acknowledge overpopulation as a problem in developing countries. Migration of people to high-consumption societies is to be countered only by lowering the per capita consumption rates of those societies.
10. Closed borders, immigration controls, or as we call the Bush fence, the 'Wall of Shame', send out unfriendly signals to emigrant-countries whose cooperation we need to solve global environmental problems like anthropogenic global warming.
11. Relieve the wealthy of progressive income tax and capital gains tax and introduce Green Taxes. Punish those at the bottom of the income scale for not having the money to buy hybrid cars and retro-fitted houses.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Personal correspondence with the author
- <sup>2</sup> The Canadian Green Party lists no official population policy on its website. See <<http://www.greenparty.ca/en/policy>> accessed 6/2/2008.
- <sup>3</sup> See Green Party of England and Wales, Manifesto for a sustainable society—population, para 1P20 <<http://policy.greenparty.org.uk/mfss/Population.html>> accessed 6/2/2008.
- <sup>4</sup> See Green Party of England and Wales, Manifesto for a sustainable society—migration, para MG102 <<http://policy.greenparty.org.uk/mfss/mfssmg.html>> accessed 6/2/2008.
- <sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, para MG300
- <sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, para MG402
- <sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, para MG403
- <sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, para MG405
- <sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, para MG420
- <sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, para MG454
- <sup>11</sup> Green Party of England and Wales, Manifesto for a sustainable society—population, *op. cit.*, paras P123, P124, P125, P126, P128
- <sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, para P106
- <sup>13</sup> See [Irish] Green Party / Comhaontas Glas <[http://www.greenparty.ie/en/policies/immigration/immigration\\_policy](http://www.greenparty.ie/en/policies/immigration/immigration_policy)> accessed 6/2/2008.
- <sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, point 4: The European Union & immigration policy
- <sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, Appendix A
- <sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, point 1.1: The Irish context
- <sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, Executive summary
- <sup>18</sup> The Swedish Greens say that: ‘As far as political issues are concerned, the Swedish Greens put climate change, antidiscrimination and equality on top of the agenda’. See new political strategy for 2006–2010 adopted, at <<http://www.mp.se/engelska.asp>> accessed 6/2/2008. The German Greens do not appear to have a population policy on their website. Their immigration policy emphasises family reunion and immigration rights for temporary residents, refugees, and for victims of trafficking and forced marriages. Acquiring citizenship must be made easier and human rights observed. See <[http://www.gruene-bundestag.de/cms/integration/dok/186/186584.zuwanderung\\_mangelhaftes\\_gesetz.html](http://www.gruene-bundestag.de/cms/integration/dok/186/186584.zuwanderung_mangelhaftes_gesetz.html)> accessed 7/2/2008.
- <sup>19</sup> The Australian Greens, population <[http://greens.org.au/about/policy/policy.php?policy\\_id=52](http://greens.org.au/about/policy/policy.php?policy_id=52)> accessed 6/2/2008
- <sup>20</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> See Green Party of the United States, Platform 2004, Part II. Social Justice, section K: Immigration/Emigration <<http://www.gp.org/platform/2004/socjustice.html#999604>> accessed 6/2/2008.
- <sup>22</sup> See Green Party of California Platform <[http://www.cagreens.org/platform/platform\\_justice.shtml#1001820](http://www.cagreens.org/platform/platform_justice.shtml#1001820)> accessed 6/2/2008.
- <sup>23</sup> ‘Greens call for immigration reform legislation based on immigrants’ rights and economic stability on all sides of the border’ <[http://www.wagreens.us/home/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=523&Itemid=94](http://www.wagreens.us/home/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=523&Itemid=94)> accessed 9/2/2008
- <sup>24</sup> The New Mexico Green Party Platform, Section J: Immigration/Emigration, p. 22 <<http://www.greenparty.nm.org/documents/Platform20040404.pdf>> accessed 6/2/2008
- <sup>25</sup> Iowa Green Party, Human Rights and Civil Liberties—immigration <<http://www.greens.org/iowa/minoritiesleaf.htm>> accessed 6/2/2008
- <sup>26</sup> See Californians for Population Stabilization <<http://www.capsweb.org/index.php>>.
- <sup>27</sup> Green Party of California Platform, *op. cit.*
- <sup>28</sup> See excerpt from the Green Party of Missouri’s population policy at <[http://www.sci.sdsu.edu/salton/Immigration\\_PopGreenParty.html](http://www.sci.sdsu.edu/salton/Immigration_PopGreenParty.html)> accessed 6/2/2008.
- <sup>29</sup> Green Party of Minnesota, platform <<http://www.mngreens.org/documents/platform#P>> accessed 7/2/2008
- <sup>30</sup> The Green Party of Hawaii, platform, D12: Population <<http://www.greenhawaii.org/platform.htm>> accessed 7/2/2008
- <sup>31</sup> Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, population policy <<http://www.greens.org.nz/searchdocs/other11396.html>> accessed 7/2/2008