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Murray Bookchin

Resolution: "On Gubernatorial Races"

July 1st, 1990

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Murray Bookchin submitted the following resolution to the Second Continental Conference of the Left Green Network on July 1st, 1990. It was adopted by a vote of 24 -- yes; 16 -- no; 6 - Abstain.

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Libertarian municipalism is premised on developing a dual power -- grassroots in the fullest sense in that its politics rests on the most immediate popular institutions in the political realm namely the municipality, and confederal relationships between municipalities in which the coordination of power is vested in confederal councils whose authority diminishes as the confederal structure is raised to encompass ever-wider political jurisdictions.

State power functions on precisely the opposite principle -- namely, the preemptive authority of the nation-state over gubernatorial jurisdictions and of gubernatorial jurisdictions over municipalities, which have been appropriately designated from a statist viewpoint as mere "creatures" of the state. Historically, over many centuries, there has been a continual struggle on the part of statists to establish politically hierarchical nation-states in flat opposition to efforts by municipalities to establish confederal associations. As recently as the last century, not to speak of conflicts that occurred in the French Revolution, the "commune"

and "the commune of the communes" have been advanced as an authentic revolutionary alternative to the nation-state.

THE IMAGE OF A CONFEDERAL MUNICIPALIST POSITION AND A RECOGNITION OF THE TENSION THAT HAS ALWAYS EXISTED BETWEEN CONFEDERAL MUNICIPALITIES AND PURELY STATIST FORMS, such as national governments and provincial or state governments, is fundamental to the new politics that the left Greens advance. Libertarian municipalism stands or falls on whether this tension between a struggle to re-constitute society around confederated municipalities and confederal structures on the one hand, and state structures of all kinds on the other, forms a cornerstone of the Left Green Network's program. To obscure the distinctions between confederated municipalities and state structures is to utterly subvert and thoroughly denature this conceptual and political framework. Gubernatorial campaigns utterly obscure this historically crucial tension.

Indeed, the functionality LGN and is to clarify these distinctions, to accentuated and heighten them, to a point where there is a direct, genuine confrontation over where political power will repose - in the confederated municipalities or in the state.

Governorships in the United States and provincial premieres in Canada are purely state structures. They represent exactly, together with national governments, the type of structures that the LGN seeks to abolish and replace completely by confederations of municipalities. Mayors in municipal governments, however professional their position, are at least enveloped by the municipality itself and are accountable to their communities. Governors, provincial premieres, their councils, and their legislators, by their very nature, represent purely statist structures and claim preemptive powers over municipalities. No campaign program, irrespective of its radicalism and claims, can alter this profound and irrevocable institutional cleavage between completely statist forms in confederal municipalist forms.

IT IS THEREFORE INCOMPATIBLE WITH PRINCIPLES OF THE LEFT GREEN NETWORK TO PROPOSE CANDIDATES, ENGAGE IN ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, AND/OR TO MAKE COMPROMISES THAT ARE DESIGNED TO FUNCTION ON GUBERNATORIAL LEVEL. It is a total opportunistic surrender of the LGN's position in support of confederal municipalism to represent such campaigns as the expressions of libertarian municipalism, and it is opportunistic to conduct such campaigns on the principle that they provide us with a "broader" propagandistic arena. One might just as well argue with the COC Greens who are trying to establish a Green Party that running candidates on a statewide and national level furthers the Green cause by running candidates for Congress, the presidency, and in effect by becoming a conventional political party that does not differ in any decisive way from so-called Progressive, Democratic, or NDP parties in North America generally.