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The Green Party Program at the Federal Level (1981)

A loose coalition of disparate environmental groups, including both conservationists and social revolutionaries, founded a Green Party in 1980. Its radical program stressed ecological consciousness, social equality, grass roots democracy, and peaceful methods for political change.

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Preamble (draft)

### *Introduction*

We are the alternative to the traditional parties. We have evolved from a coalition of green, diverse, and alternative candidate lists and parties. We feel connected to all those who are working in the new democratic movement: the organizations to protect life, nature, and the environment, the citizens' initiatives, the labor movement, Christian initiatives, the peace and human rights movements, the women's and Third World movements. We see ourselves as part of the green movement throughout the world.

The established parties in Bonn conduct themselves as if infinite growth in industrial production were possible on the finite planet Earth. Thus, they themselves say that they are leading us to the hopeless decision between nuclear state or nuclear war, between Harrisburg or Hiroshima. The global ecological crisis is intensifying from day to day: resource reserves are diminishing, one toxic scandal is followed by another, animal species are being killed off, plant species are dying, rivers and oceans are turning into sewers, human beings risk withering away spiritually and mentally in the midst of a late-industrial and consumer society. We are burdening generations to come with a frightening legacy.

The destruction of the foundations for life and work and the dismantling of democratic rights have reached such threatening proportions that the economy, politics, and society need an alternative that is fundamentally different. This is why a democratic citizens' movement has risen up spontaneously. Thousands of citizens' initiatives were formed; they stand up in powerful demonstrations against the construction of nuclear power plants, because it is impossible to cope with the risks and because there is nowhere to dispose of the radioactive waste. They stand up to oppose the devastation of nature, the paving over of our countryside, the consequences and causes of a throwaway society that has become hostile to life itself. It is imperative that we make a radical break with our style of thinking, which is driven by short-term economic expediency. We regard it as false that the present waste-economy still promotes happiness and fulfilled lives: on the contrary, people are becoming more and more stressed and less free. Only to the extent that we free ourselves from overvaluing a purely material standard

of living, that we make self-fulfillment possible once again, and that we appreciate the limits of nature, will our creative powers be free to restructure our lives on an ecological basis.

We regard it as necessary to supplement extra-parliamentary activities through work in local and state parliaments, and in the Bundestag, in order to create a public forum and to implement our political alternatives. This will open up an additional option for citizens' and grassroots initiatives to assert their concerns and ideas.

Green, diverse, and alternative lists have enjoyed their first electoral successes. The 5 percent clause<sup>1</sup> and other hurdles can no longer stop them. We will not participate in a government that continues on this destructive course. But in pursuing our goals we will also attempt to find support among the established parties, and we will approve resolutions from other parties that correspond with our goals.

As opposed to one-dimensional policies of increasing production, we represent a comprehensive strategy. Our policies are guided by long-term considerations for the future and revolve around four principles, which can be described as: ecological, social, grassroots democratic, and nonviolent.

### *Ecological*

Based on natural laws and, in particular, on the awareness that no infinite growth is possible within a finite system, ecological policies mean understanding ourselves and our environment as part of nature. Human life, like all life, is tied to the regulating cycles of ecosystems. Our actions intervene in these systems and have an effect on us. We cannot destroy the stability of ecosystems.

In particular, ecological policies totally reject an economy based on the abuse and exploitation of our natural materials and resources, and [they reject] destructive intervention in the cycles of the natural environment. We are firmly convinced that the exploitation of nature and humanity by human beings must be opposed in order to confront acute and serious threats to life.

Our policies manifest an active partnership with nature and humanity. They can best succeed in self-determined and self-sufficient, transparent economic and administrative units. We advocate an economic system that is oriented toward the vital needs of human beings and future generations, toward nature and the sparing use of natural resources. Our politics promote a society that is democratic, one in which human relationships – both with each other and with nature – will be approached with ever-greater awareness.

In order to implement such changes in the face of existing power relations, there needs to be a political movement grounded in human solidarity, democracy, and the rejection of achievement-based and hierarchical thinking that is determined by competition and hostile to life itself. These social and economic changes can only be achieved in a democratic manner and with the support of a majority of the population.

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<sup>1</sup> German parties need to receive at least five percent of the vote to be represented in the parliament – trans.

## *Social*

Future social policies must aim to establish a stable social system. "Social" has above all an economic component.

The present disparity in income and wealth between poor and rich is widening due to constantly rising prices and state tax and subsidy policies. We oppose a labor system that is ruled by economic power and that results in a few making decisions that affect not only the labor, but also the existence, of the many. This is illustrated by unemployment, on the one hand, and inhuman working conditions, on the other.

The destruction of living space, longer and longer distances between home and work, the commercialized enjoyment of nature and freedom all lead to the fact that despite rising incomes there is real impoverishment, the victims of which are people with low incomes, and especially children, young people, the elderly, and the disabled.

Both the competitive economy and the concentration of economic power in state and private capital monopolies lead to exploitative constraints due to growth, thus threatening the complete contamination and devastation of the basis for human life. Here is precisely where the environmental protection and ecology movement comes together with the workers' and union movement. For this reason, together we are calling for a reduction in working hours and humane working conditions.

Assuring the self-determination of the individuals involved is the only way to counter ecological, economic, and social crises. Because we are for the self-determination or free development of every individual, for people being able to creatively shape their own lives together, in solidarity with others, in harmony with their natural environment, and with their own wishes and needs, and free from external threats, we give our all-out support to human rights and comprehensive democratic rights, here and elsewhere.

Our social conditions are responsible for massive social and psychological misery. Hardest hit by this situation are segments of the population that are discriminated against on ethnic, social, religious, and sexual grounds. The social system is becoming less and less stable; the consequences are growing crime, a rise in suicides, drug consumption, and alcoholism. This social situation becomes obvious, among other reasons, on account of the fact that women in almost all social areas are disadvantaged and oppressed.

## *Grassroots Democratic*

Grassroots democratic policies mean intensified implementation of decentralized, direct democracy. Our policies are based on the assumption that decisions made by the grass roots must be given priority as a matter of principle. Transparent, decentralized grassroots units (town level, county level) must be given far-reaching autonomy and rights to self-administration. Grassroots democracy needs consolidation and coordination, if ecological policies are to gain acceptance in public decision-making against strong resistance. We will work in all political areas, so that increased codetermination by the concerned populations in regional, state, and federal referenda can help implement elements of direct democracy in the resolution of vital plans.

Our internal organization and our relationship to the people who support and vote for us is the exact opposite of what goes on in the established parties in Bonn. These are incapable and

unwilling to adopt new approaches and ideas and the interests of the democratic movement. We are therefore determined to create a new type of party organization with grassroots and decentralized structures that are inextricably linked. A party that does not have this structure will never be in a position to convincingly carry out ecological policies within the framework of a parliamentary democracy. The main idea is that the grass roots has permanent control over all holders of office and mandates and all institutions (sunshine laws, rotation principle), and they can be removed at any time in order for the organization and policies to remain transparent to everyone and to prevent individuals from losing contact with their grass roots.

### *Nonviolent*

We are working toward a nonviolent society in which there is neither oppression of individuals by individuals, nor violence by individuals against individuals. Our highest principle is: Humane goals cannot be achieved through inhumane means.

Nonviolence applies without restriction or exception to all people, that is, both within social groups and society as a whole, and also between ethnic groups and peoples.

The principle of nonviolence does not affect the fundamental right to defend oneself and includes social resistance in its manifold forms. The most effective long-term resistance is carried out in a social manner, as the anti-nuclear movement shows. We are also categorically opposed to the use of force between countries through war.

For this reason, we support an active policy of peace in international relations. An active peace policy also means that we are against the occupation of countries and the oppression of minorities, and for the independence and self-determination of ethnic minorities in all countries. Peace cannot be separated from the independence of countries and the existence of democratic rights within them. Worldwide disarmament is necessary. Throughout the world, nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons must be destroyed, and foreign troops must leave foreign territories.

Nonviolence does not rule out active social resistance, that is, it does not mean the person involved must remain passive. The principle of nonviolence means much more, that under certain circumstances resistance to state measures might not only be legitimate but necessary (e.g., sit-ins, blockades, the obstruction of vehicles) in defense of people's vital interests vis-à-vis a ruling order that loses sight of its mandate.

Source: Bundesprogramm der "Grünen" [The Federal Program of the Green Party] (n.d. [1981]); reprinted in Irmgard Wilharm, ed., *Deutsche Geschichte 1962-1983. Dokumente in zwei Bänden* [*German History 1962-1983. Documents in Two Volumes*], vol. 1, Frankfurt am Main, 1989, pp. 226-30.

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