

European Federation of Green Parties

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As Greens we have come quite a long way in our relatively short but eventful political history. Thirty years ago or so, when the first Greens started harping on the neglect of the environment and on the need to redress the balance of nature, the long-standing establishment looked down upon us and even snubbed us.

When we Greens started highlighting energy issues and the problems of climate change, some established traditional politicians tried to belittle us. When we Greens insisted on improving the quality of life of all beings on Earth and stressed the necessity of

leading a healthy lifestyle based on the consumption of safe and natural food products, we encountered resistance from a number of multinational companies and politicians.

Today the situation has changed and we Greens have been proven right by the course of events. Drastic climate change, severe water problems, desertification, respiratory diseases connected to serious air pollution, the BSE (mad cow disease) crisis, foot and mouth disease: all these tragedies of more recent years have proven to one and all that the Greens know what they are saying, are knowledgeable, well-prepared and ready to put their know-how at the disposal of humankind. And we shall be proven right again on the ongoing question of genetically modified organisms!

The consistency in our behaviour has rendered us credible politicians. In the eyes of ordinary people we Greens are today considered to be credible and consistent and that is why more people are voting 'Green'. Twenty years ago there were just a handful of Green parliamentarians. Ten years ago there were no Green ministers. Today, we can boast of thousands of local Green councillors and hundreds of national parliamentarians all over the planet, not to speak of the ever more influential Green ministers in six European and two African countries.

In the USA, nearly three million voters put their trust in Ralph Nader and the Greens last November. In Latin America the Mexican Greens formed part of the winning coalition that overthrew a 71 year old one-party dictatorship a few months ago. In a few weeks' time, we look forward to seeing the Peruvian Greens celebrating the full restoration of democracy in their country as part of the winning coalition.

Today, the major threats to our planet are global threats: gene manipulation, water problems, food distribution, climate change, disrespect for human rights, savage economic globalisation. We therefore need a global Green strategy to manage and control all these global threats. This is why we are all here in Canberra this weekend. We have been working on the text of a Global Greens Charter for the past year or so. We are very optimistic that this Charter will be adopted here in Canberra and that, whilst respecting and celebrating the multi-faceted diversity of Greens all over the world, it will serve as a basis for our common work together.



We happen to be meeting here in Australia. The choice of date and place might have been a sign of destiny. These are momentous moments for Greens and a period of great transformation in world politics. Just under a month ago, after more than 100 years of centre-right rule, one of the most important and famous cities in the world, Paris, passed over to centre-left rule; the French Greens were a determining factor in bringing about this change. At the same time more or less, we had the George W. Bush bombshell from the USA. The new American administration refuses to play its part in the Kyoto Protocol on climate change.

I am convinced that the world Greens meeting here in Canberra will be able to give a very sound and vociferous response to the egoistic behaviour of the Bush administration. Our message will be loud and clear: 'Mr Bush, you must respect the will of the popular vote in the USA; that definitely does not endorse your one-sided decision! The Global Greens and the nearly three million Americans who voted for the Greens will keep reminding you of this!'

Finally, I believe we are on the verge of another momentous moment for the world Greens: the time seems very ripe for a change of administration here in Australia. After our ministerial successes in Europe and Africa, and the New Zealand Greens' feat in the last elections, we really look forward to a stronger Green share of power in the Australian Senate in the elections later this year. We global Greens have started the countdown for your success which will be the success of all of us.