

ECOPOLIS : THE NEW CITY OF LIGHT

by Les Amis de la Terre for Paris Ecologie

The environmental coalition made up of les Amis de la Terre, the Mouvement Ecologique, the Movement for a Non-Violent Alternative, and the Anti-Pollution Committee formed for the municipal legislative election of March 13th took up to 19% of the vote. It was the first major entry of a Friends of the Earth group into the electoral process.

As the American translator of this manifesto wrote, the controversial proposals presented by les Amis as the platform for Paris-Ecologie are not merely a list of campaign promises, but the birth of a movement.

1. We will give pedestrians and bicycles first priority. The use of privately owned automobiles will be progressively discouraged within the city limits. In the streets still open to traffic, two lanes, one in each direction will be reserved for car pools, buses and taxis. All commercial and personal transit will be collective. We will provide municipally owned bicycles, placed around the city at the disposal of the inhabitants - free of charge. And we will organise a water transit system on the Seine.
2. The physical appearance of the city will change dramatically. Trees will be planted along widened sidewalks. Side streets will be transformed into gardens and parks for children. Many demolished buildings will not be rebuilt. Parks will no longer have fences. Fruit trees and gardens will be planted on rooftops.

The country will return to the city. The population will be able to learn cultivation techniques in neighbourhood vegetable gardens. Courtyards, such as the one in the Luxembourg Gardens near the Louvre, will be incorporated into all existing and new gardens.

High school and college students will study the natural sciences one day a week in the city gardens. New vines will be planted on the facades of all buildings, and greenhouses built on top of some.

Every Parisian will have enough space at his/her disposal to practice at will the outdoor sport of his/her choice.

3. We will clear the air of Paris of the gases, smoke and dust that threaten the health of the city's inhabitants. The sources of industrial pollution will be eliminated and domestic chimneys equipped with filters. All buildings in which asbestos ceilings have been carelessly installed will be rendered safe by the responsible company.

The Seine will be cleared up; swimming areas will be created along the banks. Rivers that have been diverted underground through pipes will be allowed to return to the surface. The number of fountains will be increased, and they will all be filled with water.

Industries will no longer pump polluting wastes into water. Instead, they will recycle their water in a closed system. Local residents - not private companies - will control the distribution and treatment of drinking water.

We will introduce a rigorous programme to reduce noise pollution in the city. Dangerous and non-essential industries will be converted or eliminated.

4. France will outlaw nuclear energy. Therefore, no controversies involving installation of nuclear power plants near Paris will arise (This is a reference to the current conflict over the nuclear plant proposed by Electricite de France at Nogent-sur-Seine, 100 ks from Paris).

We will limit energy consumption in the city to the current level. Progressive tariffs will be placed on all personal use. Paris must learn to depend on her own resources as much as possible - not on huge federal reserves. All buildings will be equipped with soft technologies: wind generators, solar collectors, heat pumps, greenhouses, and an efficient insulation. In new structures, a variety of alternative energy sources will be integrated and organised so that

INHABITANTS

inhabitants will be able to use certain equipment (eg washing machines, televisions, etc.) collectively on a specified floor.

To demonstrate the new technologies, towers like the Mains-Montparnasse will be partially transformed into giant solar collectors and will distribute the energy to neighbouring buildings. Waterwheels will be constructed along the Seine. For city lighting, agreeably coloured neon tubes will replace incandescent bulbs which use four times as much electricity.

5. Technocrats will no longer control city planning. Instead, local residents will contribute their ideas and designs for projects in their own district. High-rises, shopping malls and supermarkets will no longer proliferate.

Urban renewal will be done by district so that residential, work and recreation areas can be unified into a central location. Older sections of the city will be renewed without evicting occupants. Residents will be permitted to occupy abandoned government-owned buildings maintained in satisfactory condition.

6. We will move to limit bill board advertising along the streets as well as in the metro. Consumer groups helped by local artists will design and coordinate information bulletins to replace unsightly ads. Consumer goods will be required to be labelled with a statement of durability as determined by independent laboratories. The city will maintain the right to prohibit the sale of any toxic or poorly manufactured goods.

7. Domestic refuse will be recycled selectively - paper, metals, biodegradable wastes, etc. Non-refillable, non-returnable containers and packaging will be forbidden. Water recycling equipment will be installed in buildings. We will provide a composting station for biodegradable refuse in each neighbourhood.

8. We will be responsive to the nutritional needs of Parisians. As much as possible, food will be grown in the surrounding region and be of good quality: ie healthy and produced under ecological conditions.

Information will be readily available so that people can choose diets that do not harm their own health, world health, or the balance of the ecosystem.

In a self-governed, ecological society in which citizens work less and consume better, illnesses and accidents will be less frequent.

9. The city, with the aid of its inhabitants, will conduct an inventory of France's environment - including natural resources, flora and fauna, and terrain. This inventory will be used as the basis for sound ecological land-use planning and for the protection of natural resources.
10. We will lower the legal work week to 30 hours, including transportation time. As it is impossible to participate in community life and government if work and transportation consume too much time, this is essential. A reduction of workers hours will not affect the volume of production if work is oriented toward the manufacture of durable products that are appropriate to the needs of the population, and if the manufacturing processes are chosen by the workers. Moreover, shorter working hours will contribute to full employment.
11. Small industries, repair services, recycling programmes, and handcrafted products will receive priority over other goods and services. A programme of urban ecology - installation of solar heating, insulation, wind-powered generators, wastetreatment plants, and the establishment of agricultural activities in the city - will create many jobs.
12. Tedious and distasteful chores will be assigned to every citizen and rotated so that no one will spend more than 12 hours a month of each of them. In a system of relatively autonomous districts that stress productive activities and collectively run services, a division of labour that favours one segment of the population will not be possible.

13. The government will subsidise neighbourhood cooperatives. Located in public buildings such as schools, they will provide cultural activities, day-care centres, laundromats, shops, art studios, etc. Thus, people of different ages will be able to spend time together and to take part in the administration of services.
14. For the benefit of the elderly and the handicapped, urban transit will be free, as will installation and use of telephones. Necessary services will be provided free to those who cannot afford them. Rents will be determined according to the income of the tenant. Every effort will be made to bring the elderly and handicapped back into the life of the community.
15. Schools will adopt a more open, realistic attitude. Local residents will be invited to speak about their careers, their problems. Education will emphasise both intellectual and manual activities. To understand the principal processes of industrial and agricultural production, each student will practice one or more handicraft, including maintenance and repair of goods. Children will take part in the affairs of their community to learn responsibility.
16. The districts of Paris will establish special relationships with rural villages in the surrounding region. City-dwellers and rural villagers will achieve a close relationship by a) pairing city districts with towns, b) organising displacement of citizens for vacations or seasonal work and c) organising the exchange of goods, and (d) celebrating holidays together - by village, road, or block.
17. Publicly administered district banks will permit inhabitants to invest their savings in products and equipment bound for their own district. Such local investment will also minimise socially exploitative investments by ensuring that the investor is aware of the nature of his/her investment.
18. Each district of 10,000 inhabitants will elect a mayor. We will make the technical means available to citizens so that they can participate in the communications services - bulletin boards, local newspapers, cable television a central telephone station, and small computers. Important issues will be decided by referendum as in Switzerland. A popular initiative programme will allow 1,000 people to submit a referendum to the rest of the people. A representative council of Greater Paris will permit coordinated action of local elected officials from the surrounding regions.
19. We will relocate the seat of government outside of Paris and decentralise state services. Buildings vacated by the ministries will be placed at the disposal of the population. The presence of the government in Paris has long served as a pretext to prevent Parisians from governing themselves. It has also provoked the hostility of the French people against Parisians - confusing them with the Government.

The capital will move to a medium-sized city. This, along with the numerous local councils, will reduce the concentration of power and wealth, the need for lobbies, and the temptation of officials to centralise authority. Finally, the forces of repression stationed in Paris will be replaced by guardians of peace elected by local residents.

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