

## Commentary from Randolph

### THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

My first visit to Vermont was in 1957. I was part of a men's quartet that had been invited to give performances in four Vermont communities. I gained several lasting impressions from that first visit. The first was the impact of seeing the typical conjoined building -- house, garage, storage and the barn all joined in a straight line. To me it was the ultimate symbol of practicality and connectedness.

It seemed to say, "this is my space in Vermont. It serves me well and I have adapted it to my needs no matter what the season. The things that are important to me, family and animals, are connected and well cared for."

Just six years after that first visit I became a fulltime resident of Vermont along with my young family of three. It was the best decision I ever made and it has made a profound impact on all that I have done since that. I was able to establish three different businesses and adapt my "outsider ways" to the rhythms of Vermont. At your invitation, forty-years later, I am happy to submit my "2¢ opinion" to the mix.

Vermont is the right scale. It is a state small enough for all of us to feel a sense of ownership and familiarity. The levers of power never feel out-of-reach or too-far-away. It has diversity. Its has an "attitude", why else would folks from other states wonder "what is in that Vermont water?" Vermonter love their reputation for independence and "cussedness".

For the coming years I suggest these PRIORITIES:

[1] Define and start building a new, sustainable economy.

[2] Perform a clear eyed analysis of each community.

Have the community lead out in that analysis.

Examples: -- define its population demographics (to fit 6-8 possible models)-- its degree of economic dependence or independence of large population centers-- its ability to grow a larger percentage of its own food within the state-- its educational quality and cultural opportunities- how it can enhance its welcome to tourists and visitors

[3] Create statewide benchmarks for Vermont

communities to aim for. Examples:

- an annual INCREASE in the percentage of locally grown food
- an annual INCREASE in the percentage of local jobs (within 10-miles of village center)
- an annual DECREASE in its uninsured residents for healthcare
- an annual DECREASE in the number of residents with medical risks (smoking & obesity)
- a balance of community events that will bring its residents together in all seasons

[4] Celebrate communities that take important steps toward the needed sustainable economy of the future.

We do NOT need to secede to become more independent of the unsustainable OVERCONSUMPTION that is taking place in much of our nation. I believe we can maintain connectedness with our fellow citizens in other states without going down the same path that they seem to be taking. The new Vermont will be able to weather any future economic season just as we now weather each natural season.