

History

The Green Party of California grew out of something called the California Green Assembly, a short-lived network of Green Committees of Correspondence around the state.

The Green Committees of Correspondence (GCoC) broke California into three regions for representation at the national level. The Northern California Greens, the Southern California Green Assembly and the Greens of San Diego sent delegates to Inter-Regional Committee meetings held around the country three times a year.

Delegates from local CoCs were gathering simultaneously once a year to develop a national Green program, initially called Strategies and Policy Approaches in Key Areas (SPAKA).

Green locals in California liked the idea of having a statewide network of GCoC locals and in November of 1989, the California Green Assembly was launched. One of the priorities of this Assembly was preparation for the founding of a California Green Party.

Here is a brief synopsis of the party's first two critical years.

Fresno (November 1989). The first meeting of the California Green Assembly in the literal center of the state. The group agrees that calling our party "Green" is crucial but learns the name is officially in the hands of Green Future, a cult group directed by a mysterious Argentine millionaire named Silo. Kent Smith and Roger Picklum volunteer to investigate securing the Green name from the California Elections Division. They discover that the Siloist qualification period will end December 31, 1989. On January 2, 1990, Smith and Picklum file a request for the Green name on behalf of the California Green Assembly.

Davis (February 1990). Sixty Greens from 20 different CoCs announce the formation of the Green Party of California, pending receipt of the Green name from the Secretary of State. It is assumed that the party effort is still an official project of the California Green Assembly.

Los Angeles (March 1990). On March 2, the Secretary of State approves the Green Party request, giving the CoC Greens a two-year qualification period. But not everyone is happy with the rapid pace of events. Anti-party sentiment reaches a fever pitch at the statewide meeting late in the month. Some long-standing Green organizers label the "pro-party faction" as a small, non-representative, undemocratic group leading the Green movement to disaster. Mindy Lorenz is physically assaulted on the plenary floor by an irate Green. Party advocates see the differences of opinion as irreconcilable and regroup at Eco-Home in

Glendale to continue plans. The California Green Assembly is never reconvened.

Fresno II (May 1990). The Green Party Organizing Committee (GPOC) is founded. An interim Coordinating Committee is selected to attend to administrative details and speak to media. The GPOC adopts the 10 Key Values of the GCoC as a basis for the Party. The Mendocino Greens-inspired Forests Forever Initiative has qualified for the November ballot. Three thousand Greens have been registered.

Arcata (August 1990). Greens convene during the tumultuous Redwood Summer in the heart of logging country. California is divided into 10 autonomous regions.

Santa Barbara (October 1990). A permanent Coordinating Committee is filled by representatives from each of the regions. The plenary is composed of delegates allocated in proportion to voter registration.

San Francisco (January 1991). This meeting falls on the weekend following the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Delegates go out and register 700 Greens in one afternoon at a massive anti-war rally. The plenary experiences its first agonizing endorsement debate over the Hemp Initiative. Although locals are free to endorse and work for it, the statewide body does not give its blessing.

San Diego (March 1991). After heated debate and a vote, the plenary adopts a consensus-style process for decisions in which voting is allowed as an option upon request of the proposing working group. There is much concern on the part of Northern Californians that the South - especially Los Angeles - is not pulling its weight in registrations. The Bay Area has hired a professional registration coordinator named Joe Louis Hoffman. At the one-year mark, barely 14,000 Greens have been registered. Delegate projections still show 80,000 possible by the end of the year.

Santa Cruz (August 1991). Joe Louis Hoffman gives a demonstration of his ironing board registration techniques, which have led the Bay Area to register approximately half of the 33,000 Greens in the state. The plenary decides that no local should be saddled with hosting a statewide meeting in the last few months of the year. The Coordinating Committee is asked to convene for a special session in November to evaluate the qualification drive and make any last-minute plans.