

## **TOM CROFTON: Thoughts following the DPW Convention**

I left the convention really feeling that we have the opportunity to begin a new era in WI politics. My frustrations with our winning majorities in the US and State and seeing less progress than I'd like to see on the issues is tempered by the renewal of leadership and membership in the active parts of the party.

I am hoping that we can work horizontally to expand our strength in the counties, crossing lines to work district wide, sharing activities, speakers, and ideas for growing our presence. For example, we have been working in the 50th AD to develop an energy fair concept that engages the full range of the political spectrum, educates about building a decentralized, home-grown energy system, supports sustainable economic growth based on living wages and keeping our energy dollars in the region, supports existing local small businesses, deals in immediate, local ways with global climate change, and allows us to act as responsible citizens in our community outside traditional politics. Simultaneously, we will be using the events as places where the local County Party can sell food concessions as a very effective fundraiser and establish a consistent presence. (The response from local vendors has been fantastic...windmills, electric cars, canola to bio diesel, solar panels, and on and on).

This idea of a one/two punch, engaging outside of politics on pressing social issues, and layering in traditional political activities can be a key to bringing in the independents and disaffected liberals who see political parties as all being the same.

Our rural regions are changing demographically, and the aging, college educated baby boomers are becoming a major part of the electorate. Many of these people are not party members, but respond to work on social issues.

We also have the opportunity to turn our farms and large buildings, such as schools, in to the power plants of the future, and can educate our "conservative/ independent" farm folks into recognizing the economic value of producing more energy than they use, so that their waste streams becomes profit centers for their businesses. Any true sustainable movement needs to have economic development in its mix, and if the economics drive the politics towards a greener world, we win without proselytizing.

This energy fair concept is a template, with vendor lists and step by step organizing work developed to allow other counties to repeat the process for themselves without the initial start-up work.

I believe that need to develop a wide range of similar activities across the state and share the work to build the party into the future. If we do this well, the elections will be the easy part.

Tom