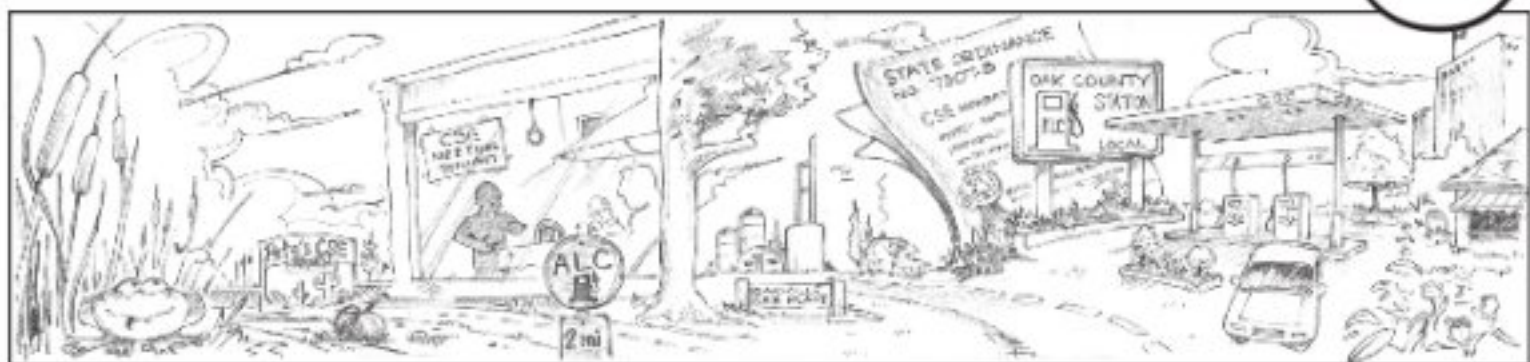


6



A VISION FOR THE NATION

Every so often, someone within my earshot will say about me something like, "He's a visionary." I always try to respond by adding, "... but practical."

Let me give you an example of a vision that manifested itself in my home county of Santa Cruz, California. The county had been spraying herbicides along all the county roads for years. Thousands of gallons drained off the roadsides and accumulated in the Monterey Bay Sanctuary, killing all the toads in the creeks. Without the toads to keep garden pests in check, homeowners felt they had to resort to spraying many more pesticides.

People protested, signed petitions, showed up at county supervisor meetings, and attended endless pesticide use meetings. But it never budged the people in charge of the spraying. All the protesters accomplished was to get the county to agree that if people would cut the weeds down in front of their houses along the county roads, they could elect not to have their property sprayed. But the county would not spend a dime to notify people of this.

So, to accomplish this vision of unsprayed county roads, I spoke to the most serious

activist and presented her with an official-looking form that I had drawn up on my computer. It appeared to be an official application to the county to exempt the applicant's property from spray and an agreement to cut their own weeds down. She would deliver this form to one home, skip a few houses and go to another, and so on. Residents had to send applications not to public works but to the elected supervisor of their district.

The public works department could have dealt with discrete blocks of houses exempting themselves. But the Swiss cheese made of their spray route, combined with the blizzard of applications descending on the supervisors, clearly made spraying an impractical, expensive, liability-ridden, and unpopular activity to continue. In order to put an end to the campaign, the supervisors ended roadside spraying, something years of polite protesting never accomplished. I like winning better than protesting.

What follows are some core strategies that I've presented to a great many people who, after hearing it for the first time, have almost always said something along the lines of, "Sign me up." So sign them up.