

The English Diggers, the "Commons," and the Green New Deal

"true freedom lies where a man receives his nourishment and preservation, and that is in the use of the earth."

Gerard Winstanley, *The True Levellers Standard Advanced* (1649)

"As Jedediah Britton-Purdy wrote in *The New York Times*, 'In the 21st century, environmental policy is economic policy.'"

As a student (and later teacher) of history, one of the periods I found most interesting was the post-revolutionary era in England, where a great variety of political, social, economic, religious and philosophical ideas were being debated and tried. Among the most interesting were those of the group that came to be called the Diggers.

Later, in San Francisco in the 60s, I was drawn to the radical group there that took its name from the 17thC group, feeling then, as I do now, that their belief that food should be free — not a commodity but a human right, like clean air and water a primary communal property, subsidized, freely available to all — was the epitome of the hippie movement I was part of and the ideology — humanist, socialist, cooperativist, ecologist — at its heart. That belief was the inspiration for much of my involvement in the food coop and environmental movements over the next fifty years.

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