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A VOICE OF SANITY

ONE major effect of the spread of Gandhian ideas has been the founding of publications in which contemporary writers provide discussions of world conditions in terms of Gandhi's basic conceptions of human welfare and what needs to be done. A good illustration is *Gandhi Marg,* the monthly journal published by the Gandhi Peace Foundation (221/223 Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi-110002 India), now in its ninth year. The issues of this journal arrive quite late so we shall be quoting from the June 1986 number, drawing on an article by Anil Agarwal, who is Director of the Center for Science and Environment in New Delhi.

This article has a particular importance. It makes the reader realize that conditions throughout the world now affect us all—that there is indeed just one world, as people used to say. It is evident that people everywhere must become convinced of this before they will begin to do the right things. A beginning has been made, Mr. Agarwal says. Ever since the UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, there has been growing awareness of the need for attention to the health of the environment, and in some countries people are beginning to plant trees where they are desperately required. Yet we have only made a beginning, and a very spotty one at that. As Agarwal says:

> But there is a major problem with this entire range of activities and concerns: it does not appear to be based on a holistic understanding of the relationship between environment and the development in this country. The programmes are ad hoc, without clear priorities, and there is too much of a policeman's attitude. They seem to be based on the belief that concern for the environment essentially means protecting and conserving it, partly from development programmes but mainly from the people themselves. There is little effort to modify the development process itself in a manner that will bring it into greater harmony with the needs of the people and with the need to maintain ecological balance, while increasing the productivity of our land, water, and forest resources.

While it was long contended by Third World spokesmen that Western concern with the environment was a selfish desire for clean air and water, while the Third World needed industrial development, saying, "Smoke is a sign of progress," today this is less frequently heard, it being gradually recognized that all is not well with the present style of "development." Agarwal says:

> The Third World today faces both an environmental crisis and a development crisis, and both these crises seem to be intensifying and interacting to reinforce each other. On the one hand, there does not seem to be any end to the problems of inequality, poverty, and unemployment, the crucial problems that the development process is meant to solve. On the other, environmental destruction has grown further apace. But what is interesting is that while many environmental problems, especially those related to air and water pollution have tended to become less severe in many parts of the industrialized world because of the introduction of highly capital-intensive pollution control technologies these problems have continued to grow and become critical in many parts of the developing world. In other words, while the economic development process in the world is only worsening our environmental problems, it is tending to solve them in the West. . . .
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> Very simply speaking, the major environmental problems in the West are those arising out of waste disposal—problems of air and water pollution and of disposal of highly toxic, industrial, and nuclear wastes. Though problems of acid rain have definitely increased and there does not yet seem to be any solution to the problem of toxic wastes, it is true that some cities and rivers do look cleaner.
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> In the Third World, however, as its own industrialization proceeds these waste disposal problems are getting worse day by day, but they are still not the major or only environmental problems. In the Third World, the major environmental problems are those which arise out of the misuse of the natural resource base: out of the misuse of soils,

forests, and water resources. These problems are created to a great extent because of the pressure to produce raw materials for modern industry. The Third World's environment not only provides raw materials for its own industries but also for the industries of the West.

The food needs of the Western world have played equal havoc with the lands of the Third World. No statistics on this are available, but if someone did collect them, he would definitely find that despite the world-wide process of decolonization, there is today many times more land being used in the developing world to meet the food and other biomass needs of the Western countries than in the 1940s.

The Sahelian drought (1968-74) which took the lives of 100,000 nomadic people, Agarwal says, was largely caused by the French colonial policy by reason of the French demand for vegetable oils. "Through heavy taxation policies, the French colonial authorities forced the West African peasant to grow groundnuts at the expense of subsistence crops. Groundnut cultivation rapidly depleted the soil." This, directly or indirectly, pushed the nomads north into the Sahara where, "When the long period of drought set in and thousands of animals and human beings began to die, the nomads and their overgrazing was blamed." Meanwhile the French and the cooperating Sahelian elite were regarded as "innocent." This is a pattern of exploitation of the poor in other Third World countries, of which Agarwal gives examples. He then says:

. . . the pattern of environmental exploitation by industry that we see on the global scale simply reproduces itself on the national scale in India. What Western industry does to the Third World environment, Indian industry does to the Indian environment. Just to get an idea of how heavily dependent modern industry is on the natural environment, it may be useful to point out that nearly half the industrial output in India is accounted for by industries which can be called biomass-based industries: that is, industries like cotton textiles, rayon, paper, plywood, rubber, soap, sugar, tobacco, jute, chocolate, food processing and packaging, and so on. Each of these industries exerts an enormous pressure on the country's cultivated and forest lands. They need crop lands they need forests, and they need energy and irrigation.

The Indian paper industry has ruthlessly destroyed the forests of India. . . . One lesson, therefore, is clear: the main cause of environmental destruction in the world is the demand for natural resources generated by the consumption of the rich (whether they are rich nations or rich individuals and groups within nations) and because of their gargantuan appetite, it is their wastes mainly that contribute to the global pollution load.

It is the poor, Agarwal shows, who are first affected by environmental destruction. Sooner or later this destruction will make us all poor, but the people who live marginal lives, close to nature, and not in an industrialized fashion, first feel its effects. This is plain from what Agarwal says:

Environmental destruction goes hand in hand with social injustice. A major reason for this is seldom recognized. The vast majority of the rural households meet their daily household needs through biomass or biomass-related products which are collected free from the immediate environment. In short, they live within nothing other than a biomass-based, subsistence economy. Food, fuel (firewood, cowdung, crop wastes), fodder, fertilizer (organic manure, forest litter, leaf mulch), building materials (poles, thatch), herbs and clothing are all biomass products.

Water is another crucial product for survival. Water is not biomass itself, but its availability is closely related to the level of biomass available in the surrounding environment. Once the forest disappears, the local pond silts up, the village well dries up, and the perennial stream gets reduced to a seasonal one. The water balance gets totally upset with the destruction of vegetation: in a monsoon climate like ours with highly uneven rainfall over the year, this means greatly increased runoff and floods during the peak water season and greatly increased drought and water scarcity in the lean dry season. There is reason to believe that the number of "problem villages" from the point of view of availability of drinking water may be increasing.

Actually, what is happening as a result of the industrialization of the entire world is the erasure of the possibility, gradually, of the subsistence or natural economy. The poor are being driven to take part in the market economy, which means subjecting them, in a wholly unprepared state, to cyclic economic oscillations which have nothing to

do with their lives and with which they cannot possibly cope except in hunger, illness, and unspeakable desolation. In India, 90 per cent of the cooking fuel is biomass, much of it collected by women who range through the diminishing forests for dead limbs or anything they can carry and will burn. Several hours a day of a woman's time in some areas is required for collecting wood in order to cook for her family. Saving the forests is for such people a matter of life or death. And Agarwal says:

> Biomass resources not only meet crucial household needs but also provide a range of raw materials for traditional occupations and crafts and are, hence, a major source of employment: firewood and cowdung are important sources of fuel for potters; bullock carts and catamarans are made from wood; bamboo is a vital raw material for basket weavers, and so on. Traditional crafts are not just being threatened by the introduction of modern products but also by the acute shortage of biomass-based raw materials. A study from the Indian Institute of Science—the first in India on the changing market of bullock carts—reports that people in Ungra village in Karnataka can now no longer afford to buy new bullock carts with the traditional wooden wheel because wood has become extremely expensive.

The market economy is a cash economy. The subsistence economy, on which probably more than half the world relies for survival, involves little reliance on money but on reciprocal relations with the natural world. The skills needed for participating in the subsistence economy are those of the farmer and the craftsman who obtains his raw materials from nature. The skills for participating in the cash economy relate to the institutions brought into being by the market, involving all the complexities of buying and selling as well as the techniques of exploitation of the resources of the natural world. When markets were small, the two economies were able to function without disaster to either, through sensible cooperation. But when the world market came into being all economic operations became subject to its effects, which were largely unpredictable and without relation to human welfare. One of its major effects, as anyone can see, has been the creation of worldwide poverty as well as great riches for a few. Under these conditions, life became a competitive struggle for survival, along with increasing impoverishment of the natural world. Agarwal regards this as "The Transformation of Nature." He says:

> Nature is not just being destroyed. Nature is also being steadily transformed. There are two major pressures operating on the country's natural resources today. The first, generated by population growth and thus increased household demand for biomass resources, has been widely talked about. The poor often get blamed for the destruction of the environment. But the second set of pressures, generated by modernization, industrialization and the general penetration of the cash economy, are seldom talked about, at least in policy-making circles.
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> Modernization affects nature in two ways. First, it is extremely destructive of the environment in its search for cheap biomass-based raw materials and in its search for cheap opportunities for waste disposal. Unless there are strong laws which are equally strongly implemented, there is no attempt made to internalize environmental costs and both public and private industrialists prefer to pass them on to society. State governments are also happy to give away large tracts of forest for a pittance and throw water pollution control laws to the winds to get a few more factories.
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> Second, modernization is steadily transforming the very character of nature. In physical terms, the tendency is to reduce the diversity in nature and transform it into a nature that is full of high-yielding monocultures. The driving force for this transformation arises out of the commodification of nature. Whether it is a herd of cattle, a pond, a forest or an agricultural field, the attempt is to reduce diversity and promote the most high-yielding gene for maximum profit and production, the first more so in capitalist systems and the latter probably more in socialist systems. The long-term sustainability of the new system is seldom considered. The ecological role of the original nature is usually disregarded while transforming it.
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> In social terms, the transformation is generally away from a nature that has traditionally come to support household and community needs—and the culture that had come into existence on its basis—and towards a nature that is geared to meet urban and industrial needs, a nature that is essentially cash

generating. Excellent examples of such transformations are the pine forests in place of the old oak forests in the Himalayas, the teak forests in place of the sal forests in the Chotanagpur Plateau, eucalyptus plantations in place of natural forests in the Western Ghats and now the proposals to grow oil palms in place of tropical forests in the Great Nicobar Islands. Both these phenomena—the destruction of the original nature and the creation of a new nature—have been taking place simultaneously in the Indian environment and on a massive scale.

Pine and teak forests serve the lumber interests, but not the villagers who live on the fringes of the forest, who are protesting bitterly at the loss of the trees they use and need. Farmers also object to the planting of eucalyptus.

> What happens to the poor people when eucalyptus is planted on a farmer's field? We have a concrete example from a village in Punjab, where a rich farmer, a former governor, with over 100 hectares of land, has stopped growing cotton and has switched to eucalyptus. As long as he grew cotton, enormous quantities of cotton sticks would be available for the landless laborers in the village to use as fuel. Because of the shortage of firewood, crop wastes from the landlords' fields are the major and often the only source of fuel for these poor landless villagers. Now, with eucalyptus growing, their main source of fuel has dried up, putting them in a precarious position. This is a case of where afforestation has actually created a fuel famine for the neediest community.

Toward the end of his article, Agarwal sums up:

> What we see in India today is growing conflict over the use of natural resources and, in particular, over biomass between the two sectors of the country's economy: the cash economy (or the modern sector) on one hand, and the non-monetized, biomass-based subsistence economy (the traditional sector) on the other.
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> As the growing stock af biomass goes down and the demand for biomass from the cash economy goes up and finally demand begins to exceed supply, pressure to exploit the remaining biomass increases enormously; biomass prices rise, and destructive processes accelerate because of market forces. Illegal timber felling is today a major activity in the country undertaken with the full support of political interests. . . . Firewood is no longer a fuel of the poor but of the relatively rich. The poor now subsist on qualitatively inferior sources of biomass fuels: crop wastes, weeds, twigs, cowdung and whatever organic kachra (waste) that they can find.

Broadening his subject, Agarwal says:

> The Third World's population crisis today arises not because its current growth is unprecedented, but because it can neither solve its problems by spilling over into other ecosystems, nor does it have the financial clout to purchase resources from other ecosystems. The Third World can survive only by finding a process of development that would allow it to accommodate its needs. This is something that the Western development model does not know and cannot teach.

At the end, he says:

> The answer to India's immediate problem of poverty lies in increasing the biomass available in nature and increasing it in a manner that access to it is ensured on an equitable basis. . . . Nothing could take us closer to Gandhi's concept of gram swarajya than striving to create village ecosystems which are biologically diverse and self-reliant in their local biomass needs to the maximum extent possible. This will clearly demand an extremely intensive use of our natural resources like land and water to create a huge and diverse growing stock of biomass. Any science which teaches how to do this will truly have the right to be called a people's science—and indeed it will have to begin with the traditional knowledge of the people. Even more so, planning for the enhancement of village ecosystems will call for village level planning with the involvement of the people—a level of decentralization that has never been attempted either in resource planning or in resource management.

Curiously, this thinking in Gandhian terms about the welfare of India has its mirror image in the deliberations of the bioregionalists in this country, who represent the clearest recognition we have of what needs to be done, not only here, but throughout the world. The facts of life make this apparent. Good writers, men like Anil Agarwal in India, men like Wendell Berry and Wes Jackson and Peter Berg in this country, are speaking the facts, and there are those who, out on the land, have already made beginning in the right direction. They need help and support.

REVIEW
PERSONAL SAGA

THE world of the geographers is not the real world. The real world is the world each one of us makes for himself out of feeling and idea. The good writers all know this. It gives wonder and appeal to what they write. For an example we propose the writing of Harlan Hubbard, who was born in Kentucky in 1900 and is still vigorously productive. But his productiveness is of life as a whole. He has only three books—*Shantyboat,* which appeared in 1953, the story of how he and his wife, Anna, floated down the Ohio River to New Orleans, having built what was for them a comfortable houseboat himself; *Payne Hollow,* produced in 1974, issued by Eakins Press, telling where he and his wife eventually settled and lived for many years; and finally, his *Journals 1929-1944,* published this year by the University Press of Kentucky.

This last, which we have for review, is the reflective and meditative account of the life of a man, not too sure of himself, yet sure of what he needed to do—a man who did not fit in with the world as it is, yet found ways to manage rather well. Lovers of Thoreau will almost certainly like this book. Hubbard's inward life has been something of a dialogue with Thoreau, with Hubbard agreeing and disagreeing, yet learning much from the New Englander. In his foreword to *Shantyboat,* Wendell Berry says:

> The Mississippi River in Winter flood is a more difficult wilderness than Thoreau encountered at Walden or on his summer canoe trips in the Maine woods. The difference is that whereas Thoreau's stay at Walden resulted in a change of moral viewpoint, a new sense of "economy," the Hubbards' long journey downriver and their much longer stay at Payne Hollow have resulted in a livable life.
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> Because it was so long and difficult, requiring them to be so thoroughly practical, the Hubbards' river voyage was not just an encounter with a formidable kind of wilderness; it was, paradoxically, an encounter with domesticity. *Shantyboat* is an account of life amid the elements: the backlands and backwaters, weathers and currents that require human skill to be great because human control is so small. . . .
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> In ending, I want to say what I think is the finest quality of Harlan's writing: that is his modesty, the *justness* of his speech, his care to write of each thing as no more or less than it is. He will let nothing stand either for its price or for some "alien" meaning. He would not say, like Thoreau, that "The sun is but a morning star." Harlan is neither lecturing nor prophesying; he makes no such presumption upon our attention or our understanding. He is speaking to us simply because we happen to be listening, which is both discriminating and polite. And the sun is the sun to him; aside from seeing well by it, he shows no wish to improve it. He speaks, instead, of the peewee's "timid whistle expanding and rising into ecstasy, a burst of joy in the face of approaching darkness." That is a proper human hope and recompense. We know that it is, because that is what Harlan has quietly given us.

Why did Harlan Hubbard decide to build a shantyboat in which to float down the river? He explained that floating on the river "affords a chance for a more unhampered life than any other accessible region."

> I had no theories to prove. I merely wanted to try living by my own hands, independent as far as possible from a system of division of labor in which the participant loses most of the pleasure of making and growing things for himself. I wanted to bring in my own fuel and smell its sweet smoke as it burned on the hearth I had made. I wanted to grow my own food, catch it in the river, or forage after it. In short, I wanted to do as much as I could for myself, because I had already realized from partial experience the inexpressible joy of so doing.

Is this natural human maturity? Are such objectives matters that we all should seek to grow up to? What problems would drop out of view if such goals became the ends of the great majority? Why is this outlook so rare? For men like Harlan Hubbard it is but common sense.

It is time for some sampling of the *Journals.* As you read in this book, you always know how

old he is, since the date of the entries gives his age. We should say here that Hubbard was all his life a painter. When he was still a boy, his father having died, he and his mother moved from Kentucky to New York City, where he did well in school and in 1918 began attending the National Academy of Design where he studied drawing and painting. His older brothers were already in New York and persuaded his mother and Harlan to join them. During summers he worked on farms. Then after a time, he and his mother returned to Kentucky, she finding it lonesome in New York. They settled in Brent, on the Ohio River, where Harlan learned carpentry and woodworking, eventually becoming an all-round handyman, good with tools. Meanwhile he converted an abandoned planing mill into a studio where he could paint. The first entry in the journal, in 1929, was this:

> Now I must break forth from my old self, cast away old traditions, unbind my eyes, so that I may have a broader vision of truth, so that I may come to this river, as I do today, and not find it cluttered with emotions and thoughts of former days; or its shores lined with the drift of cities. I must see the elements as they are, earth, water, sun. I am animal, foraging about, as much a part of earth as the bird singing overhead. Even in city streets and buildings, I am skill on the frontier.

In the fall of 1932 there is this entry:

> In current writing, I find no trace of spiritual aspiration. We are now ashamed to desire to be temperate and chaste. Ideas are like tides, and their unseen force cannot be fought. Yet one cannot let himself go without feeling great loss and doubtful gain.

A few days later he wrote:

> The ancient words about talk being a tinkling cymbal or sounding brass where there is no love, or whatever the simile, is true in painting. To me nothing is more empty than work in which I am concerned with some theory of color or artificial composition, and in which love of subject is forgotten.

Then, in March of 1933:

> There is but one sin—to be ineffectual. Nothing makes me feel lower than to have a task end in failure, if it is due to my lack of judgment or skill or patience.
>
> At the river yesterday. The river had started falling. The highest stage was over 63 feet. I was on board Will's shantyboat. They are surely cozy places, the low ceilings and windows and doors, the yellow flood so close to one looking out, the gentle motion of the boat. They are larger than they seem, his being 40 feet long and 14½wide.
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> I have been affected by this rise of water. It suggested primeval times when the earth was being made. It separated the earth from the works of man. I saw my true dwelling place. I need a flood in my soul, to carry off all the old drift and the flimsy habits that have extended down to the water's edge. It will come, causing suffering and loss. If it does not come, the river will become stagnant, filled with growth and mud.
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> Repentance and apology are useless. All I can do is to apply what I have learned this time. My friend will understand. In Thoreau, also, the most beautiful passages are those which have to do with human life rather than science, which have some sentiment.

Hubbard is an exacting man who sets his own standards and tries to measure up to them. What else is important? Is this the true law of morality? Is this what makes Thoreau—and Hubbard—worth reading? Reading them drives such questions to the fore.

The reports of people he met and knew are sketchy, although there is this in 1933:

> I walked down the railroad to Coal Haven. It is a hot, sultry morning, the sun burning through the sultry sky. This section hand is a heroic figure. Summer and winter, in heat and cold, snow and rain, he works steadily and without complaint, enduring as much as Ulysses ever did. How brown and tough he is! How much skill he has put into the handling of a shovel! What thoughts does he have, dim and sad? They are revealed in his weak and hopeless laughter. Yet he must spend happy hours in the cool evening on his porch overlooking the river, with his young children. .

Two months later, telling of a walk, he says:

> I saw much that was beautiful in every glance, all around. I made four watercolors. How different from some barren walks, when I tramp over miles of

> country, seeing nothing, never opening my sketchbook. Yet those hours are not really barren, even though there is no visible result. It was a very hot, close morning. I stopped at W's on the way home and set Mrs. W's clock to running. How pleased she was to hear it again and to think of its cheery striking during the long night. I thought that if ever I was alone, without friends or resources, I would start out afoot with a small kit of tools, perhaps only pliers, screwdriver, little hammer, file and knife, an assortment of nails, tacks, wire, oil can, glue, whetstone. I would go through country towns and cities doing little chores that householders never seem to accomplish, free a door that stuck, fix a lock or clock, sharpen knives, and scissors, replace broken sash cords, mend the gate, maybe lay some stone or fix the fence, hoe the garden or trim the trees. I am qualified by experience.

This is a portion of a life—Hubbard's life. There are other portions in the journal and in the other two books. Inevitably, this man as a writer grows on you.

COMMENTARY
A "GRAVITATIONAL FORCE"?

LAST month the *Los Angeles Times* (Sept. 14) printed a brief article by John Tirman, director of the Winston Foundation for World Peace (in Boston) which seems soberly encouraging on the subject of the growing inclination of the people of the United States to put an end to war. He began by considering why it should be that Ronald Reagan, "the most vociferous of all Russophobes," should now be willing to sign an agreement with Mikhail S. Gorbachev "to eliminate major categories of nuclear missiles in Europe." He repeats some speculations regarding what seems a definite change in attitude, then says:

> But major arms-control agreements are more firmly rooted in the political culture. Indeed, the fact that arms control was high on the President's agenda was due significantly to the extraordinary outburst of peace activism occurring in the 1980s.
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> It was the massive demonstrations in Europe in 1981 that first riveted attention on the new and perilous nuclear stand-off on the Continent. At the same time, a similar if less strident movement was spreading through the United States, coalescing in 6,000 local groups that forcefully articulated their concerns: speaking to neighbors, writing pamphlets, lobbying Congress. Nuclear-freeze resolutions were placed on city and state ballots, and were victorious in nearly every test. A citizens' diplomacy grew quickly as well, establishing sister cities of the Soviet Union, beaming televised space bridges around the world, sending delegations to Moscow.

Mr. Tirman comments:

> The results of this dissent began to appear, ironically, only after it was widely assumed that the movement's vitality had been sapped by Reagan's re-election. Two years later the House of Representatives voted approval of five bold strokes of arms control. Among them were restrictions on nuclear testing, chemical-weapons production and anti-satellite weapons tests (the last also enacted by the Senate). The large majorities by which these measures were voted attest to the power of the grass-roots peace activism across the country. Would these politicians have supported measures that were binding on a reluctant and popular President if they didn't know that their constituencies were agreeable—indeed, insistent? Hardly. That legislative performance has been repeated in the 100th Congress, backed by an accelerating shift in public opinion.

This seems a completely reasonable conclusion. Mr. Tirman goes on:

> The network of local activists has been complemented by the initiatives of larger and more sophisticated organizations. These advocacy "think-tanks" provide policy analysis, legal support, Capitol Hill pressure, high-level exchanges with the Soviets and many other services aimed at prying open the cloistered debate on U.S. arms policy.

Tirman speaks in particular of the work of the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Union of Concerned Scientists and the Federation of American Scientists, groups which have "provided ground-breaking, and probably decisive, critiques of 'Star Wars.'" Then comes an important comment:

> On a topic that is as complex and secretive as nuclear weapons, democracy is constrained, virtually locked out. A small circle of experts and officials have made decisions, force-fed them to Congress and then presented them to the public as bi-partisan, consensual *faits accomplis.* The results of this decision-making apparatus—50,000 nuclear weapons, a $300-billion military budget, a quarter of U.S. science mobilized for weapons research and development—are at least debatable, but a product of democracy they are not.

The peace movement, Mr. Tirman says, is beginning to democratize this process, concluding: "The peace community is now a permanent fixture in the constellation of American politics, emitting its own light and exerting a powerful gravitational force."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
OUR SOCIETY

READING in a current book, *The Gift,* by Lewis Hyde, which is now available as a Vintage paperback ($7.95), we came across a passage which says a lot about the kind of society we have and the world we live in. High-school age is not too soon for such information to reach the young. Hyde begins the chapter we are going to quote:

> It is the cardinal difference between gift and commodity exchange that a gift establishes a feeling-bond between people, while the sale of a commodity leaves no necessary connection. I go into a hardware store, pay the man for a hacksaw blade and walk out. I may never see him again. The disconnectedness is, in fact, a virtue of the commodity mode. We don't want to be bothered. If the clerk always wants to chat about the family, I'll shop elsewhere. I just want a hacksaw blade.
>
> But a gift makes a connection.

To illustrate, Hyde gives the example of a custom practiced in cheap restaurants in the south of France where all those having dinner sit at the same table. At the each patron is a small bottle of wine.

> Before the meal begins, a man will pour his wine *not* into his own glass but into his neighbor's. And his neighbor will return the gesture, filling the first man's empty glass. In an economic sense nothing has happened. No one has any more wine than he did to begin with. But society has appeared where there was none before. The French customarily tend to ignore people whom they do not know, but in these little restaurants, strangers find themselves placed in close relationship for an hour or more.

The pouring of the wine allows conversation and possibly friendship to begin. While the exchange of wine was trivial, a little gift by each one was involved, introducing the graces of society, just as we try, when seated with a stranger on a plane, to do something courteous and nice for the person who happens to be next to us.

> A gift is often the first step toward normalized relations. (To take a negative example, the United States did *not* offer aid to Vietnam after the war. The American Friends and the National Council of Churches both gave gifts to the Vietnamese—medical supplies and wheat—but Congress refused all reconstruction aid and the State Department went out of its way to frustrate the churches' attempts to ship food. For the government, it seems, the war was not over.)

The spirit of giving may sometimes bring a relieving quality into ways of doing business. This is especially notable in the customs established in small businesses, which result in real humanity in hard times. But when businesses get big, humanity is forgotten. Hyde finds a shocking example of this in the way the Ford Motor Company marketed its Pinto automobile. Cost benefit analyses ruled the company's decisions. The company, in this case, "had to decide if it should add an inexpensive safety device to its Pinto cars and trucks."

> The Pinto's gas tank was situated in such a way that it would rupture during a low-speed rear-end collision, spilling gasoline and risking a fire. Before putting the car on the market, Ford tested three different devices that would tend to prevent the rupturing of the tank. One would have cost $1, another $5, and the third, $11. In the end, however, Ford decided that benefits did not justify costs, and no safety feature was added to the vehicle. According to Mark Dowie, between 1971, when the Pinto was introduced, and 1977, when the magazine *Mother Jones* printed Dowie's analysis of the case, at least five hundred people burned to death in Pinto crashes.

Since the company anticipated selling eleven million Pinto cars and trucks per year, Ford's cost-benefit analysis showed that, valuing a human life at $200,000, adding a safety device would cost $137.5 million, while the benefit in safety would amount to only $49.5 million. "As the costs so clearly exceed the benefits, the decision was made not to spend money on the safety feature." An internal memorandum of the Ford Motor Company "estimated that if the Pinto was sold without the $11 safety feature, 2,100 cars would burn every year, 180 people would be hurt but survive, and another 180 would burn to death."

This estimate was not too far from what actually happened, yet on this basis, before it happened, Ford decided to go ahead making the Pintos without the safety device at $11 per car. Hyde reflects:

> If we accept for a moment that human life may be counted as a commodity, the story of the Pinto offers a picture of decision-making in the marketplace. The classic model of market deliberation assumes an "economic man" whose desire is to increase his rewards and cut his costs. *Homo oeconomicus* identifies the elements of a problem and all of its possible solutions, treating no element as so much part of himself that his emotions would be unduly stirred by its alienation. He lines up his choices, assigns prices to them, weighs one against the other, chooses his course and acts. Few of our decisions benefit from such complete analysis, but nonetheless it is our goal in the marketplace to deliberate in this quantitative and comparative manner. . . .
>
> To return briefly to the Pinto story, when a decision involves something that clearly cannot be priced, we refrain from submitting our actions to a cost-benefit analysis. The executives at Ford seem so sleazy because we find it hard to suspend our sense that life is not a commodity. To some degree, what constitutes a gift is a matter of opinion, of course. For example, wherever there has been slavery, some life has carried a price and some not. Arable land is treated as a commodity nowadays, but there have been times and places when it was improper for it to be bought and sold. Similarly with food. "The Yakut refused to believe," writes an anthropologist, "that somewhere in the world people could die of hunger, when it was so easy to go and share a neighbor's meal." We do not put a price on food if it is an inalienable part of the community. It would still be hard to find a family where food is sold at the dinner table, but beyond that there are few who feel it indecent to announce the price of a meal. Executives at Ford might have hesitated to buy Pinto for their own children, but no sense of their oneness with the rest of human life inhibited them from assigning it a price for their analysis. The great materialists, like these automobile executives, are those who have extended the commodity form of value into the human body, while the great spiritual figures, like Buddha, are those who have used their own bodies to extend the worth of gifts just as far.

It would be a mistake, of course, to assume that Ford was an offender in this way, while other companies are not. The cost-benefit analysis rules all big business and a dollar value on human life is the only way they can measure things like the possibility of accidents.

For parents, we might include a passage from another part of Hyde's book. He says:

> In 1977 Burger King developed a character—a magician named Burger King—in an attempt to lure hungry children away from McDonald's, represented by a clown named Ronald McDonald. Burger King also bankrolled a "giveaway" program in which they "gave" the children of the nation $4 million worth of little toys. "It's a tangible reward to the kid for switching his affections from Ronald to the King," said Burger King's vice-president for marketing. Burger King was prepared to spend $40 million a year on advertising if they found their magician could attract and hold the kids' affections. . . . Magicians, clowns, and men and women with superpowers appeal to children in part because children are powerless and seek to release themselves from that burden through the imagination, and in part because super people are the stuff of fairy tale and myth. Secondly, this form of marketing uses gift decoys. Burger King's giveaway toys are technically bribes, not gifts. Sales rely on keeping those categories confused, however, for the intent is to use the bonding power of gifts to attach children to a product. The bond is not used, that is, for the increase that comes of gift exchange but for market profits. Finally, these campaigns are directed toward children because children are not as cynical as adults; they are more easily stirred by archetypal imagery and less likely to abstract themselves from emotional ties. Moreover, the child is needed to make an emotional appeal to the adult, the source of the cash.

That, indeed, is the kind of society we have. Why, one wonders, don't the educational journals take matters of this sort into account? Is it that they are not about to undertake what they regard as a hopeless task?

FRONTIERS

A Job for Everyone

WE have an indefatigable reader and correspondent in Alaska who copies out in long hand newspaper and other articles she thinks are good and sends them along to us. They are practically all about making peace. Some of them are rather heavily religious, and others express a humanist point of view, but all are good. Here is one which appeared in the *Juneau Empire* last May by Dixie Belcher, who is U.C. Co-chairman of Alaska Performing Arts. She wrote:

> It is something I will never forget.
>
> Thousands of Soviets standing with their arms lifted in the air, holding hands, singing, "We Shall Overcome," tears streaming. Unbelievable warmth, hugs, tears, children's kisses of welcome, the sharing of hope.
>
> Peace is possible.
>
> There were sixty-seven of us, Whites, Blacks, Eskimos. We were sponsored partly by the state of Alaska and we called ourselves Alaska Performing Artists for Peace. For three weeks we performed across the Soviet Union. We sang and danced for intellectuals, soldiers, peasants, Communists, students, Eskimos, Blacks, the press, and they sang and danced with us. The response was always the same.
>
> We were billed as "Alaska's gift to the Soviet Union." Thousands were turned away. Crowds broke down doors trying to get in. For the Alaskans, such a response was totally unexpected, overwhelming, and deeply moving. It changed our lives.
>
> At our first concert in Leningrad, Yupik Eskimos tentatively approached Alaskan Yupik Eskimos, speaking Siberian Yupik. Two thousand people in the world speak Siberian Yupik, one thousand live in Siberia, one thousand live in Alaska. For the first time since 1940, these Eskimos, who live only fifty miles from each other, spoke to each other, touched, shared news of relatives. There were no dry eyes in the auditorium that night.
>
> Peace is possible.
>
> Our Intourist guide sobbed through every performance. It was the best thing that happened to her, she said. She was sure it was the best thing that would ever happen to her.
>
> "You can't imagine how suspicious English-speaking tourists are," she explained.
>
> "Surely you've guided peace groups?" I said.
>
> "They're worst of all," she replied. "Not only are they suspicious, but they want to change us."
>
> Maybe we're too intellectual. In our efforts toward peace both official and unofficial, maybe we rely too much on our heads, on conditioned responses. Responses learned well on both sides, in both systems. We must recognize our common humanity. With languages from the heart—which is, after all, an international organ of communication—music, dance laughter, transcend political, ideological and language barriers instantly. Talk is easier after we have experienced songs, dances, laughter, tears. After we have experienced our common humanity, after we like each other, after we trust each other, then we can decide about sharing the planet, about peace.
>
> How can we expect to reach understanding when we try to negotiate with "the enemy?"

This story goes on with more discussions of how to get in the frame of mind that would take down the barriers between us and the Russians. It seems from the material we see that there is a genuine wave of this feeling in the United States.

Another story from the lady in Alaska—we hear from her two or three times a month—was copied from the *Vanguard Press* of Burlington, Vermont. This is a long story focused on a Burlington judge, Frank "Skip" Mahady, who early this year ruled in behalf of Burlington activists who demonstrated against the General Electric Company's plant where guns are made—guns which they maintained are used to commit "U.S.-supported and financed war crimes in El Salvador." In his opinion Judge Mahady noted that "our own federal government has recently urged the American judiciary to apply international law, both treaty and customary," which is just what the judge did, approving what the demonstrators did in the name of the Nuremberg principles. According to the report, "He cited the post-World War II cases in which

Japanese generals and German industrialists were brought before the Nuremberg Tribunals and prosecuted for war crimes.

This brings us to one more story from the lady in Alaska, a short article by W. H. Ferry, prepared for Expro, "an exploratory project on the conditions of peace," of which Mr. Ferry is a founder and member. It appeared in the Winter 1986-87 issue of *Parents & Teachers for Social Responsibility,* and begins:

> Either we will find our way to a civilization based on nonviolence, or we will have no civilization at all.
>
> This message from the nuclear age is all too slowly getting through to Americans. The final arbiter of differences between nations has always been war. There were winners and losers and, after that business as usual—more or less. But not today. The nuclear bomb makes all the difference, a difference that cannot be overstated. It makes war between great powers impossible. Everyone, including President Reagan, agrees that there would be only losers in a nuclear conflict. For those still in doubt, Chernobyl has shown that there is no defense.
>
> Yet our love affair with the bomb persists. Despite its promise of utter calamity, the bomb remains our chief legislator. Few American statesmen are willing to answer the question: How will the pell-mell chase after military power end? No American President has offered us even a glimpse of the world after the cold war. All we are asked to expect are ever-larger expenditures on more recondite weaponry; and the continuing sacrifice of human needs to programs for maintaining the cold war forever.

So, as Ferry says, peace is a job for everyone: "the reconstitution of society around the ideal of non-violence." This calls for an exercise of the imagination—no easy assignment. Making non-violence our rule means defying history, challenging psychology and political science. "After 40 years the implications of the bomb are only now being grappled with by organized religion." Yet there is nothing else to do.