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OF VARIOUS PERSUASIONS

HOW does one learn to be more persuasive? The question arises for all those who believe that solutions are already available—at least in idea or proposal—for many of the problems confronting the modern world. Yet the hope of effective persuasion often hides other problems. Apart from the obvious issue of whether the solutions are in fact solutions, or only hopeful theories, there is the consideration of the goals which are sought, and of the means of reaching them.

Ten years ago, speaking before a gathering of religious leaders, Bayard Rustin, colleague and adviser of Martin Luther King, told his audience:

> . . . in times of confusion we have got to face the fact that that which is practical—real politik—has never worked and that it is in these periods where the historical concomitants are building so rapidly that that which appears to be utopian is in fact *the* way out . . . every project we have ever set up we have set up to reveal truth, not to win minor victories. . . . Knowing one may lose, one must still proceed, and the reason one must proceed, even though one has to set up a strategy which is "no win," is precisely because no other possibility exists except to develop tactics of nonviolence. But they must be associated with and dedicated to concrete and specific efforts to bring justice, because peace proceeds, not from a vacuum, or not merely from a prayer or not merely from the attitudes of humans to be decent people but from the reflections of these attitudes built firmly into institutions which eternally broaden not the cycle of revenge but the area of justice.

Musing about the supporters of the Civil Rights Movement in those days, Rustin said: "I am not fooled—I know that most of them are in nonviolence for reasons far removed from why King and I are in it—they are in it because they see this as the only practicable way; it is strategic nonviolence." Yet the quality of life that might be born out of strategic nonviolence was better by far than the results of violence, and Rustin regarded its moral impact as "magnificent."

Gandhi said somewhat similar things: "The example of a few true men or women if they have fully imbibed the spirit of non-violence is bound to infect the whole mass in the end." After describing the ideal Satyagrahi—the true practitioner of non-violence Gandhi continued:

> We cannot all suddenly become such men, but if my proposition is correct—as I know it to be correct—the greater the spirit of passive resistance in us, the better men we will become. Its use therefore, is, I think, indisputable, and it is a force which, if it became universal, would revolutionize social ideals and do away with despotisms and the ever-growing militarism under which the nations of the West are groaning and are being crushed almost to death—that militarism which promises to overwhelm even the nations of the East.

There can be no doubt that Gandhi used the sweep of historical events to implant the ideas of self-regeneration on which the social reform he envisioned would depend. There is always, one may say, some sort of collaboration with history. While, as Rustin said, the object of nonviolent persuasion is "to reveal truth," its practice needs to be associated with "concrete and specific efforts to bring justice." Persuasion involves either the service of the ideal to the practical, or of the practical to the ideal. For Gandhi, the practical had in some way to serve the ideal, or he would not take part.

There are other sides to the question. One is illustrated by a situation described by an agricultural expert who told of efforts to persuade some villagers in Southeast Asia to plant a more productive strain of rice. Well, they planted the new seed for a while, but the Western advisers discovered that the cultivation of this rice demanded unwelcome changes in village customs. The improved strain altered the traditional pattern of duties of men and women, and in addition they did not like its taste. So, after a year or two, the

people went back to using the old seed they had planted for generations. It is necessary, the agricultural expert concluded, to go there first equipped with cultural anthropological skills, and try to reform their customs before attempting to persuade the people to use the better seed.

E. F. Schumacher, who heard this report, commented on the work of the Intermediate Technology Development Group, with which he is associated. "We don't," he said, "encounter this sort of obstacle, for the reason that we only go where we are invited, and then to help solve specific problems." At issue, in this case, is the question of appropriate persuasion as well as appropriate technology.

Should there be persuasion to remodel people's lives, or should the help given be of a sort that is understood and asked for by people who of themselves have a general idea of the improvements they want to make? In short, is there presumption behind the persuasion, or is it calculated to do no more than increase the capacity of people to do what they have themselves chosen to do?

Acts of persuasion may also need examination in terms of the distinction made by Lafcadio Hearn between two sorts of goals: "Finite and in so much feeble, is the wish to have: but infinite in puissance is the wish to become; and every mortal wish to become must eventually find satisfaction." Actually, most worthy causes related to historical objectives mix the two goals. The American colonists wanted to be rid of British mercantile exploitation and they also wanted the dignity of self-determination and self-rule. Gandhi made this distinction with regard to Indian independence as long ago as 1908, in *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Home Rule). Early in this book he constructed a dialogue between himself, as Editor, and an Indian Reader, to clarify the issues:

> *Editor:* . . . Why do you want to drive away the British?
>
> *Reader:* Because India has become impoverished by their Government. They take away our money from year to year. The most important posts are reserved for themselves. We are kept in a state of slavery. They behave insolently toward us, and disregard our feelings.
>
> *Editor:* If they do not take our money away, become gentle, and give us responsible posts, would you still consider their presence to be harmful? . . . Suppose we get Self-Government similar to what the Canadians and the South Africans have, will it be good enough?
>
> *Reader:* That question is . . . useless. We may get it when we have the same powers; we shall then hoist our own flag. As is Japan, so must India be. We must own our own navy, our army, and we must have our own splendour, and then will India's voice ring through the world.
>
> *Editor:* You have well drawn the picture. In effect it means this: that we want English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger's nature, but not the tiger, that is to say, you would make India English, and when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englistan. This is not the *Swaraj* I want. . . . It is as difficult for me to understand the true nature of *Swaraj* as it seems to you easy. I shall, therefore, for the time being, content myself with endeavoring to show that what you call *Swaraj* is not truly *Swaraj.*

In the balance of the book Gandhi presented the ideas which would form the foundation of his life for almost forty years—until he died. Gandhi was intent upon persuading his countrymen to undertake the regeneration of Indian civilization, and for this goal the political liberation from British rule was only one practical step on the way, making Indian responsibility effective. For him, the struggle for political freedom was significant only to the extent that it contributed to the development of the character of the Indian people. The goal was not merely the possession of rights and opportunities, but the kind of *becoming* which Hearn prized above all. "By wanting to be," Hearn exclaimed, "the man should become a god."

Possessing and becoming seem always to be joined in revolutionary situations. Tom Paine was the great champion of the American Revolution. His persuasive call to the people in the *Crisis* series may have been responsible for the American

victory. For this revolutionary cause, Paine had the collaboration of history in composing his persuasions, but a few years later, when the new nation was making its Constitution, Paine's effort to have human slavery outlawed had no success. And his still later attempt to free the minds of the people from bigotry and dogma in religion earned him only hatred and scathing attacks from majority opinion. The persuasion in *Common Sense* was geared to another rhythm in human development. Only a better *becoming* was involved.

Philosophical and religious conceptions are probably more persistently offered in persuasion than any other set of ideas. Here the goal is, or should be, entirely ideal, concerned with the fulfillment of inner becoming, yet at the same time religious ideas are beset by more compromises and corruptions than any other area of life.

How do great religious or philosophical teachers go about spreading ideas they hold to represent saving truth? What persuasions do they use? Take for example the idea of the immortality of the soul: Is it desirable to persuade all humans to "believe" in a future life?

This teaching, apparently, has been an issue of sectarian controversy since the time of the Buddha, whose reticence—or unwillingness to use persuasion—is of notable interest. One of the stories collected by Oldenberg relates that when the wandering monk Vacchagotta asked Buddha whether or not there was an enduring Ego in man, "the Exalted one maintained silence." Later, when questioned by his disciple, Ananda, Buddha gave this explanation:

> If I, Ananda, when the wandering monk Vacchagotta asked me: "Is there the Ego?" had answered, "The Ego is," then that, Ananda, would have confirmed the doctrine of the Samanas and Brahmanas, who believed in permanence. If I, Ananda, when the wandering monk Vacchagotta asked me "Is there not the Ego?" had answered, "The Ego is not," then that, Ananda, would have confirmed the doctrine of those who believed in annihilation. If I, Ananda, when the wandering monk Vacchagotta asked me, "Is there the Ego?" had answered, "The Ego is," would that have served my end, Ananda, by producing in him the knowledge: all existences (dhamma) are non-ego? . . . But if I, Ananda, had answered, "The Ego is not," then that, Ananda, would only have caused the wandering monk to be thrown from one bewilderment to another: "My Ego, did it not exist before? But now it exists no longer!"

We are obliged to conclude that one who was accounted a great spiritual teacher—perhaps the greatest of all—thought it best to leave an inquirer in doubt rather than give grounds for dogma or misinterpretation. Edmond Holmes has a section in *The Creed of Buddha* on the Teacher's silence, in which he discusses this and other stories of the Buddha's reticence. The gist of his explanation is that the human personality is but the raw material of the soul, and while one may think of his personality as his "self," this personal self, often identified by no more than loosely connected notions accumulated from earthly memories, is hardly worthy of immortal life. Giving his own reading of the Buddha's teachings, and not the interpretations of any of the existing Buddhist "churches," Holmes says:

> That the Ego is not real, in the fullest sense of the word, till it has become one with the Universal Soul, is the postulate on which all his philosophy, both as a whole and under each of its aspects, would be hinged. On its way to the goal of union with the Divine, the individual soul must needs pass through many stages of unreality. So long as it retains its sense of isolation, its mistaken sense of I-ness it is, comparatively speaking, unreal. What is real is its potential universality.

The unreality lies in the idea of separateness from all else. And since the acceptance of separateness is the "great heresy," in Buddha's view, winning belief in an idea of immortality based on separateness would be worse than uncertainty. Hence, no doubt, the negations of Theravada Buddhism, which firmly reject the idea of a persisting soul—a doctrine in curious contrast to the Northern Buddhist teaching of the Buddha-like *Bodhisattvas*—men who have virtually completed the cycle of egoic evolution on earth, yet remain as teachers and helpers of mankind,

incarnating periodically for this purpose. But the denial of the ego doubtless served as protection against religious extravagance and the belief that the trivial identity of personal conception could have eternal life. The Buddha, well aware of both possibilities, left the wandering monk's question unanswered.

Edmond Holmes makes this comment:

> For "those who understand," the language of paradox and negation has a meaning; but paradoxes bewilder the uninitiated, and the language of negation is apt to be mistaken for the language of denial. . . . This, then, was the tremendous problem that confronted the sages of the Upanishads. Possessed with a spiritual idea, so deeply, so inexhaustibly true that, if it could be assimilated by the heart of man, it would in the fullness of time "redeem the world,"—they were debarred, on the one hand by the fundamental laws of thought and language, on the other hand by the very depth and truth of their cherished idea, from revealing it—*as an idea*—to mankind.

Plato, for whom the idea of immortality was fundamental, chose another way of avoiding dogmatic conclusions which would stand in the way of ultimate understanding. He constructed the Myth of Er, in the tenth book of the *Republic*, to provide a scheme which preserved both moral freedom and the rule of Necessity or Law. Before birth, the tale relates, the souls who are to be reborn are brought to a place where they are able to see "the working of Universal Law" at the very axis of the cosmos, as J. A. Stewart explains in *The Myths of Plato*. They are given opportunity to choose their lives to come, but are informed that this decision will include "the whole complex of circumstances" which go with the attractions that influence their choice. In this mythical doctrine of rebirth, Stewart observes—

> Plato lays stress, as he does elsewhere, on the unbroken continuity of the responsible Self evolving its character in a series of life-changes. It is the choice made before the Throne of *Ananke* [Necessity] which dominates the behaviour of the Soul in the bodily life on which it is about to enter; but the choice made before the throne of *Ananke* depended itself on a disposition formed in a previous life; the man who chooses the life of a tyrant, and rues his choice as soon as he has made it, but too late, has been virtuous in a previous life, [but] his virtue has been merely "customary," without foundation upon consciously realized principle. . . . To be free is to be a continuously existing, self-affirming, environment-choosing personality, manifesting itself in actions which proceed, according to necessary law, from itself as placed once for all in the environment it has chosen—its own natural environment which is the counterpart of its own character. . . . It is, in other words, the freedom of the "noumenal," as distinguished from the "phenomenal" Self, which Plato presents as the "prenatal choice of a Life"—mythically; which is, indeed, the only way in which such a transcendental idea can be legitimately presented. A certain Life, with all its fortunes and all its influences on character, when once chosen, is chosen irrevocably. But, none the less, it is a life of freedom, for "Virtue is her own mistress." In being conscious of Virtue—that is, of Self as striving after the good or self-realization—the Soul is conscious of its own freedom. . . . The momentary prenatal act of choice which Plato describes in this Myth is the pattern of like acts which have to be performed in a man's natural life. Great decisions have to be made in life, which, once made, are irrevocable, and dominate the man's whole career and conduct afterwards. The chief use of education is to prepare a man for these crises in his life, so that he may decide rightly. The preparation does not consist in a rehearsal, as it were, of the very thing to be done when the crisis comes,—for the nature of the crisis cannot be anticipated,—but in a training of the will and judgment by which they become trustworthy in any difficulty which may be presented to them. . . . Its aim is to cultivate faculties rather than to impart special knowledge.

In the silences of the Buddha and in the myths of Plato, then, we have examples of the sort of persuasion practiced by the wise concerning ultimate questions. Not only doctrines, not one-dimensional accounts of a life to be, but the mode of thinking about the meaning of immortality is the concern of these teachers. The Buddha was more interested in helping men to distinguish between the permanent and the impermanent than in converting them to any belief—for what good is conversion to belief without the perceptive awareness on which the *meaning* of immortality depends?

The psychological environment of today differs from that of Buddha's time, and from that of Plato's, too. There is now, among our best thinkers, much subtlety of perception—including the capacity to recognize the validity of the Buddha's explanation to Ananda, and also the moral integrities in Plato's Myth of Er. Yet as Hans Jonas says in *The Phenomenon of Life*, the idea of survival after death is at odds with the modern temper. There are two reasons for this: One is the stubborn materialism of scientific methodological assumptions, and the other is the deserved rejection of the shallow conceptions of religious orthodoxy. Immortality, says Prof. Jonas, must offer the promise of *self*-fulfillment, and its terms will then be precisely the terms of our life in this world. For only on these terms can true fulfillment be obtained:

> To try them in our being, and to experience the vicissitudes of our try, not knowing the outcome in advance—this is our genuine claim. Without those terms, without the anxiousness of chance and the zest of challenge and the sweetness of achievement under such terms, no bliss gratuitously granted can be anything but a counterfeit coin for what has been missed. It also would lack all moral worth. Indeed the here cannot be traded for a there—such is our present stance.

This seems close to an expression of the maturity the Buddha hoped for in the aspirants of his time, and close, also, to the attitude Plato wished to strengthen by his mythic instruction. Yet, strengthen by his mythic instruction. Yet, ironically, it is offered by a modern scholar as the means of explaining why the modern temper cannot accept the idea of immortality. In such a denouement, persuasion in behalf of belief has little value. Mature moral intelligence seeks a deeper foundation in existential ethical certainties. Then doctrinal amplification can be more safely pursued.

REVIEW
A NEW SPIRIT IN SOCIALISM

WE have for review another self-published paperback (although not self-printed)—*The Next Step,* by Richard Acland (post paid for 1£ or, say $2.60 for people in the United States—order from the author at P.O. Box 41, Exeter, EX4, 6EQ, England). Mr. Acland was a Liberal MP until 1955, when he resigned from the Party and the House to protest the H-Bomb, and he has since been a teacher in high schools and colleges. Ostensibly, his book is about Socialism, but there is really very little about the familiar sort of politics in what he says. The book is of interest mainly for its evidence of the fundamental change in feeling and attitude of people who work for general good at the political level.

A little more than ten years ago, in a pamphlet issued by American socialists, Erich Fromm said:

> What has happened to the ideas of the perfectibility of man and of society? They have deteriorated into a flat concept of "progress," into a production of more and better *things*, rather than standing for the birth of the fully alive and productive *man*. Our political concepts have today lost their spiritual roots.

With its humanistic aims forgotten, Fromm says, the Socialist movement came to be regarded as exclusively "for the *economic* improvement of the working class." This criticism is now increasingly heard among socialist and radical thinkers, its most recent expression in America being James and Grace Boggs' *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century*. Not merely a just sharing of "things," but the establishment of conditions permitting and encouraging human fulfillment is the objective of these increasingly philosophical socialists. Similar themes, otherwise expressed, are found in the works of Lewis Mumford and Theodore Roszak. Richard Acland writes as an advocate of such objectives, pinning his hopes on the increase in the number of people who are ready to abandon mechanistic and positivist ideas of knowledge, class theories of revolution, and materialist goals of social change, and who want to work together through educational communication, a new politics, and self-reform for a better life for all.

To describe the sort of persons to whom he particularly appeals, Mr. Acland quotes James Hemming, a well known humanist:

> We sense a deep significance beneath the everyday syntax of affairs, an underlying reality that eludes us but in which we share. To see ourselves in this context is, by tradition, religious. It is to accept ourselves in a state of struggle and of search, and of being, within a mystery. That this is the condition of man is undeniable, but the moment one uses the word "religious," people are liable to presume that one is throwing in one's lot with a set of institutionalized ideas. This is by no means the only possible outcome, and to think so is to miss the real nature of man's religious striving. One of the great needs of the present is for men to be free to explore their personal being in all its mystery without feeling themselves consigned thereby to being pigeon-holed. Those who want a label and a home are free to choose, but it is possible to know the force of man's utmost quest and to share in it without feeling able to settle down in any of the religious systems.

Mr. Acland sees both radical Christians and "religious" humanists of this sort as having a common ground with the philosophically minded of other faiths—an outlook summed up by Peter Berger in the idea that "there is another reality, and one of ultimate significance for man, which transcends the reality within which our everyday experience unfolds." Another conception stressed as crucial by the author is that the highest individual fulfillment comes "through *involvement in* and *communion with* Mankind as a Whole." He names this outlook Monism—a term borrowed from Teilhard de Chardin, but quite confusing by reason of its earlier usage with a different meaning.

Why is Richard Acland a socialist? Mainly, it seems, because he regards the acquisitive dynamics of Capitalism as having failed to serve the common good and having created anti-human

socio-economic structures which are unable to reverse their tendencies. He assembles evidence to show, first, that "indefinite exponential increase is materially impossible; and second, even were it possible, it would never make us happy." He quotes Robert Heilbroner, who said: "Affluence does not buy morale, a sense of community, even a quiescent conformity." The structures, habits, and proclaimed goals of the present economic arrangements shut out efforts for a classless society—which Mr. Acland calls the Undivided Community, in which, despite many natural differences among human beings, "all will feel equally valued and equally involved and equally responsible."

This sort of thinking may point to some sort of socialist order, but it is hardly a goal to be reached by any sort of power politics. The socialism of the communitarians seems the end here described, which could only come about through a growing indifference to "things" and a spreading concern for the welfare of others. But in that case, the resulting "socialism" would be merely a common-sense arrangement rather than the *source* of the good life. To the good society, economic systems would be matters of technical detail, not engrossing moral issues.

Speaking critically of the "effective working philosophy of the whole Western world," Mr. Acland says:

> What has to be understood is that the intellectual criteria of this century *actually are* a denial of meaning and purpose in social and personal life. This is true whether we find those criteria at their popular level in the saloon bar of the pub around the corner, or at their academic level in the Senior Common Room of the local University. Typical men and women of today will not find any firm purpose or meaning except after identifying and repudiating the popular and academic philosophy of the century in which we live. . . . C. H. Waddington said: "Dr. Frankl said that he comes across neuroses based on a frustrated search for meaning. . . . Smythies says that you cannot have a neurosis unless a cultural activity suppresses some natural tendency. . . . Do not these two statements taken together mean that our present society is actively repressing the search for meaning . . . making meaning a dirty word?"

Mr. Acland finds this meaninglessness reflected in the existing socio-economic structure:

> What actually happens in an industrial society like ours is determined by faceless men whose names are mostly unknown to us, working on information that is seldom if ever disclosed to us, reaching their decisions by criteria that take scant account of us, operating through processes that are not even in theory amenable to the influence of any of us, and between them owning the newspapers that tell us our troubles are due to bureaucrats. The criteria they adopt in reaching their own decisions are inimical and, as some would say, flatly prohibitive to the emergence of any widespread sense of social responsibility; and are such as now almost inevitably leave 5-10 per cent of us standing idle while there is almost endless socially useful work that needs doing. . .

How does this situation look to the coming generation?

> What must be so stupefyingly discouraging to young people, either at the conscious (or more damagingly) at the subconscious level, is simply this: No matter if it's nobody's fault, the actual situation being what it is, most young people can go from month's end to month's end, reading the newspapers including the serious ones, seeing the television programmes including the serious ones, hearing and joining in adult conversation, without ever meeting a grown-up who offers a word or a line of argument about the long-term need for basic change in the industrial structure of society.

There is no class appeal or argument in this book. It is addressed to all those "whose serious personal concern stretches beyond care of themselves and their families so as to embrace either the whole of Humanity and its total contemporary predicament, or some smaller and nearer group of their fellow human beings whose needs they hope to meet." A large part of the initiative, at the outset, Mr. Acland feels, must come out of the middle classes. He thinks of the people he is writing for as "potential opinion formers." "If small companies of people begin to draw together because of sharing a common outlook they will want to do the same thing; but they will do it in organized ways." They will

endeavor to spread the idea that it is folly to look forward to "any significant increase in the annual material consumption of the average British family." They will not have a sectarian approach. They will not appeal to "workers" alone or assume that the Labor Movement can lead people out of the wilderness. The reformers Mr. Acland is looking for are likely to say to the Labor Movement—

> . . . "you seem to think that salvation comes through social engineering; and we know, in our work that it does not. It depends on somehow persuading and enabling people, one by one, to take a healthier outlook on life as a whole."

He advocates no wrecking policy toward Big Business, maintaining, instead, that international money-making institutions, despite their enormous present power, "will be found to be unworkable whatever we do." Many people besides professed socialists now regard this as self-evident—ecologists, for example, who are often not political at all. Therefore, says Mr. Acland,

> In this new and developing situation, should we try to say by our words and much more loudly by our actions: "This is unworkable; and just in case it isn't, we are doing our best to prevent it from working"? Should we not do much better if we were effectively saying: "This is unworkable; and you will find it unworkable *even though you can see that we are doing what we can to make it work"?*

COMMENTARY
VILLAGE-MAKERS

A READER in Canada has sent us two small leaflets published by Don and Lin Warren, prime movers in the formation of the New Villages Association, 3, Salubrious, Broadway, Worsc. WR12 7AU, England. One leaflet introduces the idea of self-sufficient village communities of, say, 500 to 1,000 population, which would have a land base of an acre per person, the land to be acquired by a land trust. The Warrens intend to get one community going and have made a start in raising funds and recruiting participants who will train themselves for taking part. Among the skills required are animal and crop husbandry, beekeeping, carpentry, clothing manufacture, food storage and preservation, forestry, health, education, labor organization, legal and financial know-how, simple power production, sewage treatment, and water supply. The Warrens want to hear from interested persons.

The New Villages Association hopes to afford basic educational facilities to those who want to help pioneer in village formation. The introductory leaflet states:

> Each aspect of the villages should be dealt with at the appropriate level. Thus most of the land area would be cooperatively farmed for the production of meat, grain and dairy products, but small plots of half to one acre should be attached to each household for fruit and vegetable growing and for raising small livestock. However, flexibility of structure is important.
>
> Although the villages would aim at a large degree of self-sufficiency, total isolation is neither possible nor desirable. To earn the necessary "foreign exchange," and supply internal needs, one or more small-scale industries would be required. These must be limited in size and carefully chosen according to ecological acceptability and the indispensability of the goods produced.

The other leaflet reprints "Back to the Land," by Roger Franklin, pointing to the need for actual start in this direction, and quoting from Kropotkin on how land-based, self-supporting communities may be organized. The Warrens comment:

> It is now two years since *Blueprint for Survival* was published, yet still no real start has been made on the sort of alternative community described there and above. One or two very small-scale schemes are struggling into existence but we have a long way to go to achieve anything like Kropotkin's vision of local self-sufficiency.
>
> It is time that people with the same basic beliefs worked together toward the practical realization of their ideals. . . .We outline a plan whereby this could be achieved. We claim no originality for this plan; but we are committed to its development, and determined to devote our energy and abilities to bringing about a community free from exploitation.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

THE ROAD BACK

FROM time to time we feel impelled to suggest that the *New Yorker* editors be invited to put together brief texts for study by the young in high schools. The clarity, penetration, and good sense of some of the "up front" paragraphs are seldom equalled. For example, in "Talk of the Town" for Oct. 21, 1974, after quoting various government officials on the threat of inflation and the energy shortage, the writer puts the problem in revealing perspective:

> At least as striking as the volume of dire warnings in the last few weeks has been the dearth of ideas about what to do. In fact, a pattern of stalemate is so pervasive that our inability to find solutions to our predicament has to be regarded as one more of the predicament's unusual characteristics. The pattern of stalemate shows up, for instance, in our attempts to frame domestic economic policy: we find that the cure for inflation promotes economic recession and that the cure for recession aggravates inflation.

Then, having quoted some of the more inane slogans voiced by politicians and noted the futility of remedies now being attempted, the writer continues:

> Encompassing the world's economic predicament is a wider predicament, which grows out of our having breached the limits on how much human enterprise the natural order can endure. This wider predicament gives the narrower, more purely economic predicament its unprecedented character. For, as might be expected, in a crisis that was caused by an excess of human dynamism, each bold new action we come up with by way of a solution only worsens the predicament. When too much bold action is what has got you into trouble, it is hardly surprising that more bold action proves to be self-defeating.

Well, what should we do? One thing, the *New Yorker* points out, would be for the human race to "beat a quick retreat from material progress of all kinds and get back to a less extravagant way of life." This would indeed be a solution. It would wipe out inflation, reduce pollution, and improve our health along with our psychological wellbeing. It would also be effective peace insurance.

This prescription sounds fine, but there are reasons why "we" don't dare to take it. More than anything else, a hard look at these reasons is called for. The *New Yorker* makes them plain:

> The circumstance that rules out this course for the immediate future is that we have grown to depend upon the abundance of the modern economic machine almost as much as we depend on the God-given provenance of the natural world. We depend on this machine not just for luxuries but for survival. The truth is that we wouldn't have a clue to how to live without it. . . . The road backward from our day to some earlier, "simpler" time, when everyone grew his own vegetables and rode a bicycle to work, is as uncharted and as filled with incalculable suffering as any of the ways forward. In fact, such a regression, attractive as it might seem to a "nostalgic" generation, is nothing more than a dream. Of course, there may yet prove to be some sidewise route of escape from the tightening vise of our condition by means of new technological invention, but so far no such plans have gone beyond the stage of wishful thinking.

While it may be the job of our "leaders" to try to keep the existing economic machine in good working order, if only to avoid immediate disaster, this inevitably means trying "to sustain, and even to step up, the growth that got us into trouble in the first place."

The *New Yorker* shows that at this juncture of history, no one knows what to do—in traditional terms. The "right" measures are economically unacceptable, while "marking time" will only worsen the final "adjustment." Probably many of the young know this already, but a clear setting forth of the problem would be useful to us all. It seems that only the young—with occasional honorable exceptions among older people have the energy and optimism to start thinking and acting in some other way. The "State," as anyone can see, is quite helpless.

Well, what other approach is there? Maybe, instead of thinking of some "sidewise route of escape" through magical technology, individuals can begin to choose other ways of life, and to do this with enthusiasm and eagerness, instead of feeling like deprived and put-upon escapees. But other ways of life are not readily available—they call for

invention—for individual devising of new avenues of effort and things to do. A little help can be given, but mostly in the form of simple recitals of what a few people have already done. A pamphlet may be the most efficient means of providing this information.

We have one that seems ideal—*The Use of Poor Means in Helping the Third World,* written by Pierre Parodi, a doctor who works in Lanza del Vasto's Community of the Ark in France. The publisher is Arthur Harvey, Greenleaf Books, South Acworth, N.H. 03607, who will send one copy postpaid for 30 cents and nine copies for $2.00. Dr. Parodi speaks directly to one part of the problem set in the *New Yorker:*

> The great problems of the world are overpopulation, insufficient agricultural production, hunger among two thirds of humanity. We tend to count on the progress of science and technology to remedy this misery which grows every day. Does this confidence seem justified to you?
>
> Neither the progress of science nor the progress of technology can be relied on principally for the cure of hunger and misery. To place one's confidence in technological progress is to overlook the real problems and to excuse oneself from the efforts which may be necessary
>
> There is enough arable land almost everywhere and very simple techniques of cultivation do very well.

After giving figures on unused arable land, Dr. Parodi quotes one authority who says: "If all the available land were cultivated with a moderate yield, it could easily feed 35 billion people." Then he talks about the tools—about what E. F. Schumacher calls Intermediate Technology:

> In most countries of the Third World, agricultural techniques are very rudimentary farming with hoe and pickaxe, extensive cattle rearing, a foraging economy, lack of water power; very often there is enormous unused animal power.
>
> Even simple agricultural machines are completely out of place. They require a complete infrastructure capable of making, maintaining and repairing these complicated instruments and the capacity of using them properly. All these conditions and many others are lacking and there has already been enormous waste from wanting to mechanize too fast.

Dr. Parodi says that modest programs work best, recommending use of animal power (donkeys, bullocks), returning garbage and manure to the soil, and plenty of manpower. "If local workers are able to take over the program themselves, with limited technical aid, their countries will not become more dependent on the rich ones." There will of course be some "big projects"—dams, communications, etc.—but these have comparative unimportance in contrast to the work that the population can do to increase food resources.

What food should be grown? Crops that will give nutritional balance for the people. Much of the pamphlet discusses the requirements of a healthful diet. Dr. Parodi also points to the value of people in the industrialized nations learning to live at the level of a food supply which the poor countries must adapt to. To eat what they eat will help us to understand them, and, he says, "it is also a remedy and indicates a way to get out of the impasses of our civilization." He concludes with an account of the diet at del Vasto's Community of the Ark—basically of Gandhian inspiration—remarking that this food is the same as the food needed for sound nutrition in the poor countries, and also "the best protection against illness."

As for invention of alternative ways of living, the publisher of this pamphlet, Arthur Harvey, says on the back cover:

> In addition to publishing and selling Gandhian literature I recruit, train and work with people in agricultural labor. Some find this a missing element in lives increasingly dominated by indoor, mechanized work and intellectual, abstract pursuits.

Harvey started this activity in 1964 and it has grown to involve about eighty people a year. There is apple-picking during September and October, blueberry gathering in August, and pruning from December through April. Depending upon their capacity, these workers earn up to $3.50 an hour. The jobs require some skill. "Don't try it," Harvey warns, "if you object to authority." Beginners have to learn under supervision.

FRONTIERS

He Fitted in . . .

THE need for an ethical outlook which includes the welfare of both man and nature—the urgent concern of Hans Jonas discussed in MANAS for Dec. 18—is now a widely repeated theme. In a letter in *Resurgence* for September-October, Henryk Skolimowski proposes that traditional Humanism must now extend its radius to include the planet. In the past, he says, traditional humanism stressed the nobility, independence, and potential greatness of "the human who is cut in the Protean mould," but was content to regard nature as no more than a store of material resources. Called for, now, is a reversal of this view: "We have to see ourselves as a part of a larger scheme of things: of nature and cosmos." The *Resurgence* correspondent names this outlook Ecological Humanism—constituted of an expanded and unified conception of both ecology and humanism. He says:

> In the past ecology and humanism have trodden their respective roads and belonged to different ideologies. Ecology, as a movement, has predominantly focused on the *devastated environment.* It has striven for alternative solutions and remedies in order to bring back the wholesomeness to the environment. Humanism, on the other hand, has mainly focused on the *devastated human being.* It has striven for solutions and remedies (to injustices and alienation through reform of social and political institutions) in order to bring back wholesomeness to the individual. . . . This separation into the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of humans, in the western world, has been at the root of our mistaken notion that "nature" is there to be harnessed, subdued and exploited. Ecological humanism marks the return of the unitary view in which the philosophy of humans and the philosophy of the environment are aspects of one another.

In this outlook, the natural world acquires the same value as the human world. Humans, therefore, become stewards, not conquerors, and earth is no longer an inventory of "resources" but a sanctuary. Knowledge is sought, "not as an instrument for the domination of nature, but ultimately as techniques for the refinement of the soul," while values are not measured in wealth but in whatever leads to "a deeper understanding of people by people, and a deeper cohesion between people and the rest of creation."

Interestingly, there seems a return here, at least in spirit, to the Renaissance Platonism of Pico della Mirandola, a founder of Humanism, who said in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man:*

> That aphorism, "Nothing too much," duly prescribes a measure and rule for all the virtues through the concept of the "Mean" of which moral philosophy treats. In like manner, that other aphorism, "Know thyself," invites and exhorts us to the study of the whole nature of which the nature of man is the connecting link and the "mixed potion" for he who knows himself knows all things in himself, as Zoroaster first and after him Plato, in the *Alcibiades*, wrote.

Is it possible to find practical examples of understanding nature through oneself, which lead to "a deeper cohesion between people and the rest of creation"? It should come as no surprise that one of the "new" farmers of our time has given expression to related ideas. In an interview with *Mother Earth News* (September, 1974), Frank Ford, a Deaf Smith County (Texas) organic grower of wheat, and founder of Arrowhead Mills in 1960, spoke of the birth of new attitudes through "individual concern about society and the future."

> You can't really legislate consciousness . . . but you can put consciousness into legislation, and I think we could use some of that.
>
> I believe, though, that—as people become more aware of their loss of control over the events in their lives—they're going to turn to a more self-sufficient lifestyle and stop looking to the government for all the answers. They'll begin to regain power over their own affairs, and at the same time to take responsibility for their impact on the planet. That means—for example—having a garden, eating whole foods and choosing a backpack instead of a camper-trailer, a canoe instead of a motorboat, a bicycle instead of a car. And every day, this kind of consciousness is growing across the land.

Frank Ford started dryfarming with his father in the fertile Texas panhandle in 1947. He had a degree in agronomy but learned what he knows about organic farming from working the land—fifteen hundred acres of it. In 1960 he bought an old flour mill with one stone grinder and one storage bin and set up in business to sell stoneground wheat. Today Arrowhead Mills markets some 150 "natural food" products—including, for example, daily shipments of peanut butter valued at $2,000—but the story of Frank Ford's early struggles is the interesting part of the interview. His career is an encouraging illustration of what a determined man can accomplish in the way of constructive innovation. It is also an example of what is required of pioneers. *Mother Earth News* relates:

> The life that Frank had marked out for himself was rough going for the first six or seven years. He farmed in the summer from four in the morning until ten at night, and took construction jobs during the winter just to pay the bills and keep his tiny operation from going under. During that formative period, Ford personally did most of the growing, grinding, sacking, trucking, warehousing, shipping, bookkeeping and other work around the struggling company he had named Arrowhead Mills.

Ford said that since around 1968 people have been recognizing the value of natural foods and stone-ground flour, but that when he started out "it took somebody stubborn [and] I fitted in pretty good."

> I'd stone-grind quite a bit of [our] flour; load up my old pickup truck and haul the bags around to the grocery stores. . . . I drove tens of thousands of miles to Wichita Falls and Dallas, competing with General Mills and Pillsbury for regular flour accounts . . . stone-ground against reconstituted dollar for dollar. . . . At that time, of course, most people thought flour should be white.
>
> It took about eight years for Arrowhead Mills to really begin to grow, and we lost money the first five. But I was never discouraged because I just knew it would work out sooner or later when more people began demanding better food.

Frank Ford is a new sort of "big" businessman:

> I certainly welcome competition . . . I've even helped it. I've had some of the largest mills send us representatives so that we could teach them how to compete with us in stonegrinding grain. I'm happy to do that. Why should we be defensive about showing someone else how to produce and sell better food?