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A VERDICT BY SARTRE

THE revisionist books on the Vietnam War keep coming out. They make us sick at heart, as revisionist studies are intended to do. What, actually, should they mean to us? Early in *Papers on the War* (Simon and Schuster, 1972), Daniel Ellsberg tells what his two years (1965-67) in Vietnam meant to him, as a State Department official working with General Edward Lansdale and Deputy Ambassador William Porter:

> The urgent need to circumvent the lying and self-deception was, for me, one of the "lessons of Vietnam", a broader one was that there were situations—Vietnam was an example—in which the U.S. Government, starting ignorant, did not, would not, *learn*. There was a whole set of what amounted to institutional "anti-learning" mechanisms working to preserve and guarantee unadaptive and unsuccessful behavior: the fast turnover in personnel; the lack of institutional memory at any level; the failure to study history, to analyze or even record operational experience or mistakes; the effective pressures for optimistically false reporting at every level, for describing "progress" rather than problems or failure, thus concealing the very need for change in approach or for learning. Well, helping the U.S. Government learn—in this case, learn how to learn—was something, perhaps, I could do; that had been my business.

Well, he didn't succeed. After some years of trying, he released to the *New York Times* the text of the Pentagon Papers, in order, he said, "to inform the sovereign public through the 'fourth branch of government,' the press." He had privately attempted to influence legislators by revealing information in the Pentagon Papers, but was forced to conclude that "much of Congress, too, was part of the problem." Afterward, he asked himself:

> Will the Pentagon Papers in the hands of the public eventually do more? Or is it possible that the American people, too, are part of the problem; that our passivity, fears, obedience weld us, unresisting, into the stalemate machine: that we are the problem for much of the rest of the world?

What were—are—the Pentagon Papers? The answer is briefly given in another revisionist study, one that came out in 1979. This is a book titled *Teaching the Vietnam War* (Allanheld, Osmun, Montclair, N.J., $6.50) by William L. Griffen and John Marciano. Concerning the Papers they say:

> Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense, in 1967 commissioned a massive top-secret history of the United States' role in Indochina to cover the period from World War II to May 1968. The study, known as The Pentagon Papers, was motivated by a rising frustration with the Indochina War among McNamara and his Pentagon colleagues. Written by thirty-six anonymous government historians (mostly State and Defense department academicians), and although far from a complete history, *The Pentagon Papers* constitute a huge archive of government decision-making on Indochina for three decades. While the analysts agree in general that the United States involvement in Indochina was a costly mistake, they uncritically accept their government's official ideology. Hence one *Pentagon Papers* historian asks whether the United States *can* "overcome the apparent fact that the Viet Cong have 'captured' the Vietnamese nationalist movement while the GVN (Saigon regime) has become the refuge of Vietnamese who were allied with the French in the battle against independence of their nation." The historian's uncritical acceptance of an ideology committed to the use of force to guarantee the interests of United States global management prevents him from asking whether the United States *should* overcome this fact.
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> The United States government was unsuccessful in its attempt to block publication of the Pentagon papers because the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that their public dissemination was protected under the First Amendment to the Constitution.

Daniel Ellsberg's question remains: Would public access to the Pentagon Papers—editions by Quadrangle and Beacon—bring the necessary awakening? Speaking for himself, Ellsberg wrote in *Papers on the War:*

Here are some things I understood when I had finished reading the Pentagon Papers.

There had been no First and Second Indochina Wars, no Third War: just one war, continuously for a quarter of a century. In practical terms, it has been an American war almost from its beginning: a war of Vietnamese—not all of them but enough to persist—against American policy and American financing, proxies, technicians, firepower, and finally, troops and pilots. Since at least the late 1940's there has probably never been a year when political violence in Vietnam would have reached or stayed at the scale of a "war," had not the U.S. President, Congress, and citizens fueled it with money, weapons, and ultimately, manpower: first through the French, then wholly owned client regimes, and at last directly. . . .

Our role has defied the U.N. Charter and every principle of self-determination from the beginning, and violated our international assurances since 1954. In the technical language of Nuremburg—American language ratified by the U.N. in 1951—it is a "crime against peace." . . . For myself, to read, through our own official documents, about the origins of the conflict and of our participation in it, is to see our involvement—and the killing we do—naked of any shred of legitimacy. That applies just as strongly to our deliberately prolonging it by a single additional day, or bomb, or death. Can it ever be precipitate to end a policy of murder?

This was Ellsberg's response to the Pentagon Papers, prepared as he was by two years of observation in Vietnam. He wanted to wake the country up, and did what he could. After the United States Supreme Court ruled that such information about the policies of the United States could not be kept from the public—and the *New York Times* published much of it during the summer of 1971, with books coming out soon after—what happened?

The answer to this question is given by *Teaching the Vietnam War,* in which the authors examine the contents of twenty-eight school texts which deal with that war, nineteen of which were published after the *Pentagon Papers* had been made public. Only one mentioned the *Papers,* although revised editions gave the material a little attention. Griffen and Marciano say:

During the Vietnam War many developed an awareness, particularly after *The Pentagon Papers* were published, of how the process of news management and government deception worked. . . . For years many Americans have argued that we must learn from the Vietnam experience, and an obvious starting point is in the schools. Parents and teachers do have the power to insist on a history that will not commit us to repeat the government's crimes of the past. . . . This book's purpose is to help us recognize the distorted textbook history of one tragic period.

What were the distortions? The writers say:

When we began this project, we had no illusions of discovering any fundamental analysis of U.S. policy in Vietnam. We found instead that the basic purposes of U.S. policy were avoided, and thus the "critical" views that emerge do so in a carefully limited framework. . . .

While the earlier texts view South Vietnam as a free nation under attack by the Communists, the later view freely admits the corrupt nature of the Diem family and successive regimes, but in a manner that shows no real insight, sheds no real light, on the fundamental causes of the conflict or of U.S. motives in supporting such regimes. The later texts reveal a pathetic tale of the kind-hearted but stumbling American giant who was trapped and manipulated by South Vietnamese allies, wishing to help but held back by the likes of Diem, Ky, and Thieu. . . .

Twenty-eight textbooks examined the most bitter conflict in recent American history without calling into question a single fundamental premise surrounding the conflict. The limited margin of debate and dissent was maintained, safe from attacks upon the honor and integrity of our leaders, or upon the nation itself. American high school students, teachers, and parents could read these textbooks without *considering* the possibility that they lived in a nation that had committed the most blatant act of aggression since the Nazi invasions of World War II.

The question, of course, is *why* we have such textbooks in the schools. The first thing to recognize is the fact that wherever there have been *national* systems of education, the textbooks are filled with distortions. After World War I people horrified by the slaughter and degradation which lasted from 1914 to 1918 began to wonder how humans could do such things. They went back to the pre-war period, in France, in England,

in Germany, and looked at what the schoolchildren had been taught; they looked at the newspapers, the magazines, and the literature and drama of the time, and began to see that with such influences on the minds of young and old, war was inevitable. In *The Neuroses of the Nations* (Seltzer, 1925), Caroline Playne devoted nearly 500 pages to study of the war fever in both France and Germany. There were a few Germans as well as French and other Europeans who understood this well. Caroline Playne writes:

> A good definition of militarism and a picture of how it pervaded the spirit of pre-war culture is given by Gerhard von Mutius. He speaks of associations of all sorts which existed to further some purpose and not for the sake of helpful cooperation, not for the enrichment of life and mutual satisfaction of spirit which association might achieve. On the contrary, these associations are for a given purpose. "The exclusive purpose of modern culture, its aim, has come to be the material, tangible result, the fashioning and mastering of the external world. Results of this external kind are the false gods of modern society! This is as though there were only an external world which demanded attention as reality. The ruling position accorded to physical sciences in modern consideration is as characteristic of our culture in this direction as is the limitless lust of gain and the imperialism of the great states."
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> That which we are accustomed to call "militarism" is only a variety of the same tendency which exists throughout the whole of modern life. It is the unconditioned belief in the ultimate importance of physical and mechanical means of compulsion. Militarism is reproached in such a phrase as, "might before right," yet the whole of modern culture is infiltrated by the unconditioned cult of might. Just as the modern world is overrun with armies and navies which themselves are the final undisguised expression of the "will to power" everywhere present.

This German writer gets at the root cause of modern war, and of all the accompanying corruptions of the mind which become evident, for example, in the textbooks on the war with Vietnam. He is writing about the way modern man thinks about life, and in terms that seem as current as anything now said on the subject, although his book was published in 1919 (*Der Schwerpunkt der Kultur*). So long as human enterprise is organized for such goals, the ruthless opportunisms of war, and of the institution which makes war inevitable, the Nation-State, will continue to determine the patterns of human behavior.

Caroline Playne gives attention to the texts studied by French children in the years before 1914:

> From the earliest days of the [Chauvinist] movement great use was made of school-books for propaganda purposes; youth was bombarded by one-sided statements, favouring ultrapatriotic and militaristic ideas. The language employed was really perverse in the way in which it inculcated the glory of war, the shame of the 1871 defeat, which called for revenge, the robbery of Alsace-Lorraine and the necessity for redeeming these surrendered provinces. All this was enlarged upon and impressively enumerated in a highly exaggerated, nationalist and self-conscious strain.
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> Fonçin, in his *Lectures Géographiques*, has a section entitled "Souvenirs d'Alsace" written in this style. *La Premiere Année d'Instruction Morale et Civique*, by Pierre Laloi, which runs into the fiftieth edition, wishes French children to be industrious in school, because little Prussians are so well taught that France was beaten by Germany in the cursed war of 1870.
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> For this reason, the Republic wants French children to be better educated than little Prussian children.

A French textbook quoted by Tolstoy in *Christianity and Patriotism* declared:

> It is you—the children educated today in our schools—it is your responsibility to avenge your fathers defeated at Sedan and Metz. It is your duty, the great duty of your life.
>
> You should always think of this. . . .

So long as there are nations which embody the acquisitive purposes of ambitious and possessive men, there will be textbooks which misrepresent, excite, and deceive. And there will be teachers who fear that they will lose their jobs if they do not conform to national policies. And unless the publishers provide textbooks of the sort

acceptable to the managers of the State, they will lose their markets, their books will not be adopted by the state-controlled schools, and they will go out of business. The story is the same with the newspapers which, as the revisionist historians now point out, collaborate with government in spreading false ideas about our military enterprises and in whipping up fear and hate, more or less to order as politicians demand.

So it is not in the least remarkable that the authors of *Teaching the Vietnam War* were unable to find a high-school textbook which contained searching critical analysis of the sort provided by Noam Chomsky and Gabriel Kolko. Things omitted from the twenty-eight books will surprise most readers, such as the fact that, when the French were going down to defeat in the battle of Dien Bien Phu, John Foster Dulles offered the French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault "two atomic bombs to be used to save the French garrison there." Nor was there any notice of the fact that the U.S. gave aid to France in a war "aimed at maintaining colonial oppression of the Vietnamese."

> The judgments made in the texts on this issue, as throughout the entire history of the war, remain at the level of means and tactics. The issue of ends and basic questions, which has been raised by critics of the Vietnam War, is avoided. . . .
>
> Generations of educators, many of them uncritical and seduced by the "Big Lie" of the dominant class, have labored to keep . . . critical inquiry from the schools and the textbooks. The possibility of opening the debate on the Vietnam War in the schools rests not only with those who understand the real tragedy of Vietnam, but with those who are willing to fight for truthful history in the schools.

The authors give Noam Chomsky's over-all assessment of the war:

> The American record . . . can be captured in three words: lawlessness, savagery, and stupidity—in that order. From the outset, it was understood, and explicitly affirmed . . . that the U.S. "intervention" in South Vietnam . . . was to be pursued in defiance of any legal barrier to the use of force in international affairs. . . . Lawlessness led to savagery, in the face of resistance to aggression. And in retrospect, the failure of the project may be attributed, in part, to stupidity.

Commenting, William Griffen and John Marciana say: "The bitter reality is that the texts we examined never consider that this assessment might be accurate, or *even that it is a position which could be investigated rationally and then rejected."* Acknowledging that it is difficult for schools "to deal directly with current events," Chomsky recommends attention to past wars which have an obvious imperialist character, as for example the Spanish-American War by which we obtained the Philippines.

Well, there are excellent books on such subjects, all available in libraries if not in print. In fact, the revisionist historians are among our most valuable intellectual citizens, since, in the long run, they keep the record straight. Moreover, whether intentionally or not, they instruct us in the fact that all the wars of modern states—the wars since the revolutionary eighteenth century—have been prosecuted with an accompaniment of elaborate moral pretense. It is not necessary to claim that the believers in the "cult of might" are evil men with vicious intentions, but only to point out that they are captives of a set of beliefs which make war, along with its entire cultural apparatus, including the textbooks which misinform the young, inevitable.

The late Jean-Paul Sartre came to a realization of this sort a little over twenty years ago. In a review of *The Question* by Henri Alleg, an Algerian journalist who had been tortured by the French, Sartre recalled that during the German occupation of Paris, the invaders established a torture center in Paris. Frenchmen, walking the streets, could hear the screams of the victims. The French were shocked and appalled. They exclaimed that never would human beings "be made to cry out in our name." But in 1958, in Algeria, the French were daily torturing Algerians. Alleg, one of the victims, would not talk, and his

torture went on for months. The French tried to suppress his book, but did not succeed.

In his review, which became the introduction in a later edition of *The Question,* Sartre said:

> . . . the French have uncovered a terrible fact. If nothing protects a nation against itself, neither its past, its integrity, nor its laws—if fifteen years are enough to change victims into executioners—it means the occasion alone will decide. According to circumstances, anyone, anytime, will become either a victim or the executioner.

Sartre's conclusion is one that should be woven into the preface of every book on war. In a culture such as von Mutius describes, not the morality of humans, but only the imperatives of circumstance, make the decisions. In our generation, E. F. Schumacher was the first to point this out. People *don't matter* in an acquisitive society, and this is the most important thing of all for the revisionist historians to point out.

REVIEW
BERRY, GIONO, BRAND

WE have been reading lately in some new books issued by a new publisher in Berkeley, California, devoted mainly to literature—North Point Press. Two volumes that especially appeal are some poems by Wendell Berry and a handsome edition of Jean Giono's "pastoral novel," *Joy of Man's Desiring*, first published in 1946. You get the impression that this publisher loves and respects books and is not just in business.

We turn to Berry first. Reading his lines, the question—archetypal for a reviewer—kept presenting itself. What is a poem? Why does it hold together and what is the source of the delight it gives? Berry's poems seem a response to certain moments of life—his life—which share in melodies and rhythms we all feel from time to time; he brings them into unity and completion, the feeling and its articulation becoming the same thing. How does a feeling find just the right words? How does a painter choose a composition?

It is the human capacity to make wholes, growing out of some instantaneous perception, which is given a form of words. The poem is written down, but its essence remains oral, or lyrical. Will there come a time when we no longer write poems down, but only sing them? When we have so much poetic abundance that it will not matter if the lines are not preserved, because another and another poem will take the place of what was said? Such a time will surely come, when human speech gains natural balance and the distinction between poetry and prose becomes compost for expression which is disciplined, yet lyrical, spontaneous, and free.

The arts are a way of minimizing our imperfections, of imagining better, truer lives. When they are wholly absorbed in our being, "art" will no longer be a useful word, for humans will have completed their project, their internal Odyssey. But now, in poems, something of that future is captured and made into a flow of meaning. The poem lends us patience to endure the turns of the wheel which go on and on, reaching no destination. In the poem, the destination has been found in its germinal stage.

Berry's book is called *A Part*, and the first poem is "Stay Home."

> I will wait here in the fields
> to see how well the rain
> brings on the grass.
> In the labor of the fields
> longer than a man's life
> I am at home. Don't come with me.
> You stay home too.
>
> I will be standing in the woods
> where the old trees
> move only with the wind
> and then with gravity.
> In the stillness of the trees
> I am at home. Don't come with me.
> You stay home too.

What is a poem? It harbors resonances of meaning. It addresses the imagination. It evokes. It springs from confidence that the mind knows the ineffable secret of the one and the many, and continually brings them together, then parts them, for that is the act of birth. The poem does this in all directions, widening our humanity and our identity. In a poem the word obtains its meaning on the wing of a soaring thought. Never before had it that meaning, and there can be no duplicate; it will have echoes but no copies. It is a light, ephemeral offspring, but its mortality sups on eternity. And this is the wonder of language, a crude and cumbersome cart for meaning compared to the floating flexibility of thought, yet capable of incantations that transmute.

The imagery of poetry generates small universes of meaning, announces expeditions, rings bells of longing. On the Woods:

> I part the out thrusting branches
> and come in beneath
> the blessed and the blessing trees.
> Though I am silent
> there is singing around me.
> Though I am heavy

there is flight around me.

For true poetry there are no rules. Rules are a consequence, not a cause, of poetry. If you seek a rule, the heart of the poem is broken by the quest. The poem declares its own form, its own natural laws, and scorns excuses. Yet the cataloguers and repeaters of rules perform a service of a sort. We need the confinement of rules until the poet in us has come to some kind of maturity; he must grow his freedom and never demand it; not even think about it. Talk about freedom is a mistake for the poet; perhaps for the human, too; the being of freedom is caricatured by talk. We are free only when we have forgotten that once we longed to be free.

Well, this analysis is itself a form of defeat. As Berry laconically remarks,

> Instead of reading Chairman Mao
> I think I'll go and milk my cow.

The other book, the novel by Giono, is filled with the light and dark of life. If the Middle Ages had a timeless quality, then this book is medieval, although the time, we deduce, is early in the twentieth century, since there is a little talk about automobiles—very little. The people in the story may be called peasants, but it is better not to classify them. They are farmers whose lives are mingled with the earth. Longing moves them, as it moves us all, but their longings are somehow primeval. We knew a little of what to expect from this book by recalling that Giono wrote *The Man Who Planted Trees and Grew Happiness*, the true tale of a lonely peasant of Provence who, having lost his family, embraced the world of trees, or rather, became one of its creators. For forty years Elzeard Bouffier planted trees—oaks and beeches and lindens and maples in a desolate Mediterranean region that, for lack of forests was dying of thirst. It is a long and wonderful story, putting an end to all plaints of how little one man can do in this once so beautiful world. When the peasant at last died in 1947, he was eighty-nine years old. In his life he had transformed a vast desert region into an Eden, just planting trees, one by one. Giono concludes:

> On the site of the ruins I had seen in 1913 now stand neat farms, cleanly plastered, testifying to a happy and comfortable life. The old streams, fed by the rains and snows that the forest conserves, are flowing again. Their waters have been channeled. On each farm, in groves of maples, fountain pools overflow on to carpets of fresh mint. Little by little the villages have been rebuilt. People from the plains where land is costly, have settled here, bringing youth, motion, the spirit of adventure. Along the roads you meet hearty men and women, boys and girls who understand laughter and have recovered a taste for picnics. Counting the former population, unrecognizable now that they live in comfort, more than 10,000 people owe their happiness to Elzéard Bouffier.

This seems enough of an invitation to read *Joy of Man's Desiring* ($9.50 in paper), which is available from good bookstores or from the publisher, North Point Press, 850 Talbot Avenue, Berkeley, Calif. 94706. Berry's book of poems, from the same publisher, is $12.00 in cloth, $6.00 in paper. These books are beautifully designed and printed.

MANAS repeated the account of the peasant planter of trees in our Feb. 5, 1975 issue, quoting extensively from Giono. The full story may be purchased for a dollar from Friends of Nature, c/o D. Smith, Brooksville, Maine 04617.

Or, those prepared to spend $12.50 for the 608 giant pages of *The Next Whole Earth Catalog* will find a reprint of Giono's tale on pages 78 and 79. This is a good example of the sort of rich material to be found in the latest *Whole Earth Catalog*, which, according to the editor, Stewart Brand, has repeated only 11 per cent of the items in the previous edition.

In fact, this *Whole Earth Catalog*—dirt cheap at $12.50 after you see how much is in it and what it's like—is by far the best one yet. The page size is 11" by 14½", the type small but readable, and the contents an encyclopedia of appropriate technological and cultural intelligence. Nearly six hundred "subjects" are covered, of which water

and water systems, bees, land and land acquisition, crafts, communications, and community are a few. There will be sections requiring you to hide your check book in order to get through them unscathed—the one on tools, for example. The catalog is just that—a great big review of what's available and at the same time good, if not the best, that's available, and it probably is the best. The reviews—whether of books or machinery or useful gadgets—are by people who have read or used them. (No paid-for advertising.) Stewart Brand has collected a staff of contributors who are experts in using the tools evolved by our society for humane purposes, and they tell what they have learned. A good way to encounter the catalog is to give it ten minutes every morning at breakfast. That way it might last several months, and it's pleasanter reading than the newspapers.

The first section is headed "Understanding Whole Systems," with sub-sections such as Universe, Astronomy, Earth Resources, Evolution, Economics, and Civilization. Mumford's books are described under Civilization, and Economics quotes *Small Is Beautiful* and reviews the books by Ivan Illich. A new feature is an every-other-page department by Anne Herbert, managing editor, who has a light, yeasty touch.

This enormous book seems like a progress report on the best practical intelligence now available. It tells what our civilization is good at, and Stewart Brand has put the elaborate report between two covers with responsibility and sprightly skill, with the help of a talented staff pictured on page 2.

COMMENTARY
HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

FROM India we have received a 12-page paper, *Science for Villages*, published every two months, filled with interesting news about applications of intermediate technology that really help people in need. These contents make it evident that there are strong currents of thought in India along the lines of the work of A. K. Reddy, as reported in this week's Frontiers.

Science for Villages is issued by the Centre of Science for Villages, in Wardha 442 001 (M.S.) India, six issues for $7.00. The editor is Devendra Kumar, who begins the November-December 1980 number with an editorial on how industrialization is making a few Indians richer and the rest of the population poorer. He points out that 50.8 per cent of the people in villages and 38.2 per cent of those in cities "cannot afford even two square meals, i.e., 2400 calories in villages and 2100 calories in cities of food for a day." He comments:

> It is now time to review the Westernized model adopted by us to increase our production at competitive rates where only a small fraction of our people get employed on a comparatively higher remuneration than what the rest of the countrymen can be provided with. This pampered sector depends upon a high cost infrastructure, maintained by public exchequer, creating more problems than it solves. Production of the capital intensive type always leads to the creation of greater disparity. . . .
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> Wherever we follow policies of competitive productivity without an equally vigilant eye on distributive justice and ecological balance, it results in creating pockets of prosperity without helping to alleviate the general poverty. The net result is that even amongst the poorest nations we have the dubious distinction of having the greatest disparity. Take our three neighbors—Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka—who sail with us in the same boat of poverty and compare their degrees of disparity with that of ours. Whereas in these countries the uppermost 5% of the people own 18% of the nation's wealth and the lowest 50% have only 25% in their share, in India, the rich 5% have one and a half times more than the poorest 50%. Could it not be that our modes of economic growth are responsible for this state?

The editor concludes: "Science and technology have long been used to fulfill a megalomaniac's dream. The world is fast realizing that a complete about-turn from the present direction of industrialization has got to be taken."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
A NECESSARY PERSISTENCE

AN article in the November *Progressive*, by Jeffrey Stein, the *Progressive's* man in Washington, D.C., starts out under the heading of "Mobilization":

> In the beginning, there was the War Resisters League. And the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. And the churches—especially the Quakers and their American Friends Service Committee. These are the groups that never forget, that keep on churning out the leaflets, patching up their mailing lists, and holding seminars and conferences between wars as well as during them. You might say that they are as persistent as war itself.

They need to be. Young men still in their teens who feel that they don't belong in the army are looking for counsel and moral support. Both are available. The groups named have offices around the country, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, which has branches in many cities, is another source of counseling. The National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors, 550 Washington Bldg., 15th Street & New York Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. exists to supply information of this sort, offering kits for study by prospective conscientious objectors. Similar activity is carried on in Southern California by the Los Angeles Area Committee for Conscientious Objectors, 2531 Silver Lake Terrace, Los Angeles, Calif. 90039.

Jeffrey Stein tells in the *Progressive* about a new group, the Committee Against Registration and the Draft (CARO), which sprang up in Washington after the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviets. CARD invited people of draft age to register *against* the draft, and a lot of them did, giving their reasons.

Then there is the Vietnam veteran, Al Caesar, who was for fourteen years a sergeant in the Army:

> Today, a thirty-nine-year-old sophomore at the University of the District of Columbia, Caesar spends part of each day in the offices of the American Friends Service Committee in Washington. Caesar is black. On registration day, he went into the ghetto and talked about military life to the young dudes looking for an avenue out of the dope, despair, and chronic unemployment of black Washington through the draft. Half of them changed their minds and walked home. He told them of white officers wanting to be waited on "hand and foot" in the Army, of being sent to the front lines while whites stayed behind, of bad paper discharges, of Agent Orange, of the black veterans who fill the Federal prisons, and of the good chance that "when you come back to D.C., you aren't even going to be able to find your family, the way rich people are moving us out of the city so fast."

Who are the rich people? A remark by Robert Engler in the *Nation* for last Oct. 25 gives some indication. The oil industry, he said, "now accounts for 40 per cent of all manufacturing profit in the United States." Somehow, these things seem connected. Otherwise connected is the content of a letter in the November *Progressive* from Bruce E. Blackadar, who lives in Sparks, Nevada. He says:

> When the Nevada State Fair opened in Reno on September 3, the Air Force arrived with a large trailer containing a $100,000 exhibit on the virtues of the MX. This display, which has apparently been making the rounds among the state and county fairs throughout the West, was welcomed by the Fair's officials and given a prominent place among the Fair exhibits. However, when representatives of Nevadans Opposed to MX (NO MX) found out about the exhibit and requested a booth for an anti-MX exhibit, they were rudely told that all booth space was already reserved. When NO MX representatives attempted to distribute literature on September 4, they were forcibly evicted from the fairgrounds and threatened with arrest.
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> The Fair's director explained that NO MX was excluded on the basis of the Fair's policy of not permitting political organizations to present displays or distribute literature. In contrast, he considered the Air Force's exhibit "purely informational."
>
> Local officials in Nevada and Utah have begun taking the public position that MX is "inevitable" and have turned their attention to trying to get as big a piece of the pie for the home folks as possible. There

> is a great deal of local opposition here to MX, and we certainly do not believe it is inevitable that our state will be raped to build this dangerous boondoggle. But we need a lot more active support from people in more politically influential parts of the country to beat it.

This "dangerous boondoggle," according to the *Washington Spectator* (Oct. 15), is "the second largest project ever conceived by man. (The interstate highway system is the largest.)" The harm it will do to the region involved is described in detail in that issue of the *Spectator*. Of perhaps greater importance is a paragraph quoted from the Union of Concerned Scientists:

> MX threatens the Soviet nuclear deterrent with a knockout strike and moves us away from our posture that nuclear weapons are to deter and defend. MX is a first-strike weapon designed to start and fight nuclear war. During an international crisis, the Soviet Union would have good reasons to fear a surprise attack on land-based missiles that could eliminate 75% of their nuclear weapons. . . . The threat of MX accuracy and the extent of its potential destructiveness thus frays the nuclear trigger to a hair.

Well, the man in Nevada has a point about needing help from other parts of the country. If you live in a city and don't normally go to county fairs, you wouldn't be likely to know about the MX exhibit put on by that non-political organization, the Air Force—right next, no doubt, to the prize dahlias on display by the women's club, and the healthiest Holstein calves raised by 4H youngsters. A real family affair.

We don't often use our space here for the matters treated above, but there are times when it seems absolutely necessary. We hope that those times don't become more frequent, but it's hard to be much of an optimist, these days. On the other hand, we have a book from Ron Jones up in San Francisco which should produce some optimism in even the most down-hearted readers. It's called *Shared Victory—A Collection of Unusual World Records*—available from the author for $4.50, at 1201 Stanyan St., San Francisco, Ca. 94117. Who racked up the records? Participants at the San Francisco Recreation Center for the Handicapped. They obviously had enormous fun doing it. The pictures—all through the book—convince you of that.

What sort of records? Well, you've heard of three-layer sandwiches, but what about an inner tube sandwich?

> The World Record for the tallest inner tube sandwich is seven people compacted in between seven inner tubes. To try this record, place an inner tube on the ground. That's easy. Now lay a willing person, preferably someone who is large, across the inner tube. It works best to lie face down with your belly snuggled into the center of the tube. Now you've got the idea. One tube followed by a person, followed by another tube and another person, and so on. It's all right to have lots of help in the stacking process. In fact, that's sometimes the best job. Don't be afraid to recruit passersby to join in your quest. All they have to do is lie on a tube. Who knows—they might be part of a World Record. That is, if they can keep from laughing.

Then there was the balancing competition—another zany application of fun with inner tubes. This went on out on a lawn somewhere:

> Can you balance an inner tube on your nose? On your toes? On one foot? On your shoulder? Or on the top of your head? Or back? Stomach? One finger? Or Heel?
>
> If you can balance a tube in one or all of the above postures for thirty seconds, then you've done it. You are the World Record Holder. Congratulations.
>
> Now that you are a World Record Holder, how about finding a friend and trying to duplicate your feats with a partner? Surely if one person can balance a tube on the top of his head, then adding one more head should make things easier. Or will it?

The most exciting event was the race of hot rod wheel chairs. Photographs of these souped-up, cardboard jalopies with their ecstatic drivers, charging down the track, complete with goggles and crash helmets, fill the center of the book. It took months to prepare the colorfully painted vehicles, but the day of glory, the actual race itself, made everything worth while.

FRONTIERS

Begin with Trees

THE "Energy Crisis," as anyone who reads the paper and buys gas knows, is here to stay. One solution for Americans—which will be slow in coming because of the institutional and other reforms involved—would be to give up a lot of our mobility, in short, to evolve a decentralized way of life with more people working where they live. This will happen—it has to happen—and moving deliberately in that direction will lubricate the process, making it even enjoyable. The change will enable us to recover some of the rich meaning of having a *home*. A great many of the things we fear, these days, may turn out to be blessings in disguise. Schumacher wrote years ago about the miseries caused by excessive mobility.

Schumacher also wrote about the importance of planting trees. He advocated it for India, and then for Britain, almost with his dying breath. His reasons are spelled out in his Foreword to the 1976 edition of *Forest Farming* (London: Watkins, 1976) by J. Sholto Douglas and Robert A. de Hart. He ended this brief essay on treeplanting by saying:

> Since fossil fuels, the mainstay of the "modern system," have ceased to be cheap and may soon cease to be plentiful many people, are becoming interested in *solar energy*. They are looking for all sorts of wonderful man-made contrivances to collect solar energy. I am not sure that they always appreciate the fact that a most marvelous, three-dimensional, incredibly efficient contrivance already exists, more wonderful than anything man can make—the TREE. Agriculture collects solar energy two-dimensionally; but silviculture collects it three-dimensionally. This, surely, is "the wave of the future."

Schumacher gained much of his inspiration from Gandhi and he spent time in India. While there he reached the conclusion that "there was no salvation for India except through TREES." He reminded the Indians that the Buddha had taught that every good Buddhist "should plant and see to the establishment of one tree every five years." This advice, he said, should be taken by Indians today. "It could be done without a penny of foreign aid; there is no problem of savings and investment. It would produce foodstuffs, fibres, building material, shade, water, almost anything that man really needs."

A dramatic confirmation of the wisdom in this counsel is provided by an article in *Gandhi Marg* (journal of the Gandhi Peace Foundation in New Delhi) for last July. Writing on "The Gandhian Approach to the Rural Energy Crisis—A Case Study," Satyendra Tripathi reports on research by A. K. Reddy of the Center of the Application of Science and Technology to Rural Areas (ASTRA—a branch of the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, Mysore, India). This work has provided "a precise picture of the energy requirements in a small village, and of the magnitude of drudgery involved in meeting them." While conditions in the subcontinent of India vary greatly, it remains a fact that somewhere between 80 and 90 per cent of the Indian people are villagers, so that, India's total population being around 500 million—more than double that of the United States—the findings of the ASTRA study of the village of Pura apply to vast numbers of people.

The energy crisis in Indian villages is obviously more urgent than ours. The *Gandhi Marg* writer says:

> Like millions of rural households, Pura's 56 families are solely dependent on firewood for cooking their food, and they are finding it harder and harder to get enough of it. In this respect Pura is no exception, for growing scarcity of firewood is a countrywide phenomenon. Created by large-scale deforestation, it has been further aggravated by the swelling population of rural areas. For the few who can afford to buy this fuel, it has meant paying more for fewer logs. But for the vast majority of rural women and children, who have simply gathered it from the nearest forest in the past, the hours and kilometers of gathering go on multiplying. In terms of money its value may be small compared to commercial forms of energy as most of it is collected free of cost. However, its staggering human cost is revealed by ASTRA's finding that it takes about 2.6

> hours and a trek of 4.8 kms to collect about 10 kilograms of firewood—the daily requirement of a family in Pura.

While this village is one of the few which have been electrified, most of this energy is consumed by the irrigation pumps used by three landowners, by a flour mill, and the lighting of a few homes. Only one per cent of the over-all energy needs of Pura is met by electricity, as against 89 per cent met by firewood. Electrifying the villages only makes a few rich farmers richer. Solar cookers are impractical because cooking is done morning and evening, not at midday. Fuel is essential.

> Firewood collection consumes 14 per cent of the human energy in Pura—more than that spent in agriculture (12 per cent) and industry (8 per cent). Human energy consumption in other important activities is: cooking 19 per cent, grazing cattle 37 per cent, and fetching water 10 per cent. A disturbing aspect of this burden is that children have to share it substantially. According to ASTRA's analysis, they contribute 30 per cent of the labour involved in gathering firewood, 20 per cent in fetching water, and 34 per cent in grazing cattle. As a result, most children have to quit school at the primary stage.

Gathering firewood doesn't deforest. Women and children can't fell trees but collect dead branches and brush. The ASTRA spokesman says that the lumber industry and the brick kilus "are really to blame for massive deforestation."

What are these hungry people to do? Even if they become able to grow more rice, it still must be cooked, and what villager could afford an electric oven, in the handful of electrified villages?

> ASTRA's scientists came to the conclusion that the means of solving a problem must closely correspond with the end. They figured out that in the long run the most effective answer would be a fuel forest. They calculated that a 5-acre plantation of quick-growing species such as Casuarina and kool-babool could provide, after a gestation period of three to five years, enough fuelwood to meet Pura's annual requirement of 217 tonnes. Now they have persuaded the villager to raise such an energy forest on eight acres of fallow land around Pura.

Moreover, the 160 cattle supplying milk produce enough dung to operate a community biogas plant, the slurry from which will be far better fertilizer than raw dung. Capital for this project will be supplied by a State Council for Science and Technology and it will be run by a committee of village elders. The biogas plant will provide free gas to the villagers for cooking and also generate electricity which can be sold to small industries and the pump irrigators. The *Gandhi Marg* report concludes:

> Here then is the answer to the questions raised at the outset. Community biogas plants can not only meet the most pressing energy needs in small villages at present, they can also provide motive power for irrigation, provided the fuel needs are met through energy forests.

Here, indeed, is a fine example of the services of scientifically devised intermediate technology. It begins with the planting of trees.