

## THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH

THE modern world is wracked by economic problems, so, naturally enough, those looking for solutions turn to the economists. It follows that economists have the status of high priests in our society. Among the intellectuals of our time, no one gains the headlines that economists achieve, simply by saying what they think. Equally notable, however, is the fact that the supposed science of economics is in utter confusion. One need only turn to the special 1980 issue of *The Public Interest*—a quarterly of wide acceptance—entirely devoted to "The Crisis in Economic Theory," with contributors such as Peter Drucker, Daniel Bell, and Irving Kristol, to recognize the extent of this confusion, which is something different from understanding what is said. The fundamental assumption of economic thought is that quantity is the measure of the good. Either this is so, or economics cannot claim to be a science.

The world of modern thought now seems on the verge—or in the middle—of a change in the conception of what is good. The central assumption of economics is being challenged—most noticeably by the late E. F. Schumacher, and now by many others. Involved is a return to philosophy, for as we sooner or later see, every branch of thought obtains its assumptions from philosophy. How did the assumption of economics become dominant in Western civilization? Many long answers have been given to this question, but a brief and usable account is provided by John U. Nef in an article in the *Scientific American* for November, 1977, concerned with the energy crisis suffered by Britain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries because of the shortage of wood for fuel. Coal, plentiful in England below the ground, was the solution, and the development of coal mines transformed the country in many ways, making

possible the industrial revolution. But woven into the play of the forces at work in this great change was an emerging theory of the good:

The revolution in thinking that brought modern science into being was an even more important factor than coal in the establishment of the mechanized age. By the 1620's and 1630's Europeans were becoming aware of the immense growth in production promised by the development of the new fuel. It was in those decades that Francis Bacon wrote *The New Atlantis* (1627) and Rene Descartes his *Discourse on Method* (1637). Bacon's imaginary island over the seas was provided with a great institution of scientific research presiding over human destiny, and he was confident that a new abundance, made possible by the growth of scientific knowledge, would solve intellectual and moral problems as well as economic ones. And Descartes in his *Discourse* was no less confident. Even more specifically than Bacon he foresaw greater output, lighter labor and longer life for human beings everywhere. Even at that time there was talk of airships, submarines, devastating explosives and journeys to the moon. It was the scientific revolution in the late 16th and 17th centuries, together with the economic transformation brought about by the introduction of coal, that gave birth to the industrial world in which we live.

Scholars, Mr. Nef says, including Karl Marx and Max Weber, have believed that the "capitalist spirit" was the main cause of the enormous increase in the output of goods and services during the nineteenth century, but a more important factor was "a growing faith in quantitative progress, in the multiplication of output." By the end of the sixteenth century, the natural sciences were developing methods of exact measurement, and in the seventeenth century the calculus (of Leibniz and Newton) provided sophisticated mathematics. "Rates of growth" were introduced in the Elizabethan age, emphasizing the value of quantitative goals. "The transformation of industrial aims," Mr. Nef says,

"constituted a major advance toward an industrialized world."

In a melancholy conclusion, the writer remarks that the rise of the coal industry in Britain "weakened the position of craftsmanship and art as the heart and soul of production." People everywhere began to care less for beauty in what humans fashioned and in the surrounding environment.

Throughout history this kind of dedication to beauty has been important in setting reasonable limits to economic growth. The advent of coal seems to have diminished such dedication. The exploitation of the earth's resources has often violated the bounds of good taste. To make the most of these resources calls not only for ingenuity but also for restraint. At present man's dependence on fossil fuels is as problematic as his dependence on wood was some 400 years ago. The best hope for the fruitful exploitation of fuel resources may lie in a renewal and an amplification of the standards of beauty. If humanity is to advance, the making of history must become an art, that is, a search for beauty.

While this argument from aesthetic sensibility is doubtless playing a part in the present-day redefinition of the good, a more powerful demand for change comes from the experts at measuring, themselves, who tell us, as in *Limits to Growth*, that the planet is finite, our resources exhaustible. A good that you can run out of is not a real good. The practical changes the earth is going through strike at the heart of the assumption of economics. Material things are utilities, not the substance of philosophy. Economics began as housekeeping skills, and little by little it is being returned to its original place. Francis Bacon will soon no longer be our prophet and guide.

The great idea of the Enlightenment was that human beings are able to understand the world. Bacon declared that through this understanding we could manage the world to our welfare and profit. This seemed to work magnificently for a while, but now we see that we must change. We cannot manage the world; we do not know enough, and will probably never know enough; our only hope lies in patient and docile

cooperation. We are beginning once again to regard the world as a mystery, to study its workings in awe, and to seek philosophic foundations that will not give way in the face of an economic disaster.

The mood that is gradually forging its way to the forefront of thought seems well represented in an article in *Landscape* for January by Joseph Meeker (author of *The Comedy of Survival*). His title is "Wisdom and Wilderness." He begins by remarking that while engineers have no idea how to measure their elements or to apply their solutions to problems, Wisdom and Wilderness are "two of the most essential resources for human beings—both necessary to our survival and welfare." In short, the focus of thinking is changing. We are moving into an area left wholly unexplored by the followers of Descartes and Bacon—a region where we can bring with us no tools or instruments save our minds and our feelings. What do we encounter there, and what relationships become possible for us? The question calls for a new language, one which we are almost wholly unused to. Prof. Meeker says:

Perhaps practical minds prefer to avoid thinking about wisdom and wilderness because neither is subject to human management. They happen by themselves, according to natural processes that are not understood. No educational system knows how to create wisdom, and no science can make wilderness. We do know how to damage and destroy both of them, however, and we have devoted much of our energy to that in recent centuries. Before we reach the point where both wisdom and wilderness cease to exist, we should think about what they are, how they relate to one another, and what the world would be without them.

Now come valuable definitions:

Wisdom is a state of the human mind characterized by profound understanding and deep insight. It is often, but not necessarily, accompanied by extensive formal knowledge. Unschooling people can acquire wisdom, and wise people can be found among carpenters, fishermen, or housewives. Wherever it exists, wisdom shows itself as a perception of the relativity and relationships among things. It is an awareness of wholeness that does not

lose sight of particularity or concreteness, or of the intricacies of relationships. . . . Wisdom cannot be confined to a specialized field, nor is it an academic discipline, it is the consciousness of wholeness and integrity that transcends both. Wisdom is complexity understood and relationships accepted.

Wilderness is to nature as wisdom is to consciousness. Wilderness is a complex of natural relationships where plants, animals, and the land collaborate to fulfill their environments without technological human interference. Wilderness is a systemic complex so intricate that it often appears chaotic to eyes accustomed to simpler contexts such as farms and cities. . . . There are good reasons to believe that wisdom grew from wilderness environments.

Humans, this writer points out, have the endowment which makes wisdom possible—their intellectual capacities are turned to the service of wisdom by the few. Why, he asks, are not more of us wise?

Well, we are good at measurement and clever at manipulation, and we give most of our attention to the things we know how to do:

Cleverness is also evident in our tools and technology. We cleverly develop our egos at high cost to the natural systems around us. . . . We take little time for reflecting on the context of our lives, and even less time trying to understand how the world works.

Another reason is that we have created domesticated and urban environments that lack the species diversity and multiple relationships of natural wilderness. . . .

Human cleverness, applied over many centuries in the pursuit of human benefits, has left us with a complicated society, but not with a genuinely complex one. The difference between complication and complexity is crucial to understanding both wisdom and wilderness. For the past few centuries civilization simplified the systems of nature and increased the complications of human societies. "Divide and conquer" has been the slogan as natural processes and elements have been isolated and manipulated one at a time to make them yield maximum benefits for human purposes. This extends ancient agricultural practices requiring that only one crop at a time be grown on land that previously supported complex vegetation in its wild state, or that

animals should be bred selectively for a few characteristics and undesirable wild traits be eliminated. Specialization depends on simplification; both have proved profitable for humans and costly to the systems of nature.

These tendencies of our civilization now move toward climax—a climax of shortages, confusions, conflicts, breakdowns, and collapse. The end in nature, or wilderness, of moving toward a climax is stability and balance—a dynamic balance in which everything works well with everything else. In our development we have now reached—or are rapidly approaching—our kind of climax, and observers are recognizing what is likely to happen, telling us about it, and looking around for help. The help will come, Prof. Meeker thinks, from looking closely at the wonders of wilderness. We must learn to compare natural complexity with our technological complication, to see what is wrong with what we have done.

The diagnosis is clear, and simply put:

Technology multiplies its products prodigiously, supported by economic theories that encourage the expansion of human wants and needs. The belief in continuous growth is part of the basic ideology of conventional social and economic thought, but little attention is paid to the character or direction of that growth. New elements are added almost at random, with little thought for their integration with other elements. As Alice said of Wonderland, "things just get complicateder and complicateder."

The essential comparison—one which, when grasped, is likely to send us in search of wilderness, or the wilderness principle, in order to find wisdom—is this:

Complication tends toward chaos, while complexity is highly organized. Complexity is a characteristic of systems in which many elements are integrated to form a whole. New parts of such systems, for example, eco-systems or higher organisms, appear only when suitable niches and adequate resources exist, so their presence makes sense and does not contribute to chaos. Complicated structures tend to be fragile, as is evident in the booms and busts of modern economies, or in the devastating impact of varying the availability of one

ingredient, say, oil. In contrast, complex systems are resilient and relatively stable. They are constituted so that sub-units, by systematic cooperation, preserve their integral configuration of structure and behavior and tend to restore it after nondestructive disturbances. In other words, natural systems survive all disasters short of obliteration.

Natural systems can be exploited—twisted out of their natural shape—for a time, but only for a time. Then they are obliterated, or react or adjust in a way that leaves *our* interests out. The present ecological—and moral—intelligence is that we must learn from natural systems how to use them without hurting them, and how to live with them as collaborators instead of exploiters. This, for practical purposes, is going back to philosophy for true or workable assumptions about our lives on earth. Prof. Meeker's conclusion seems an echo of Thoreau's "In wildness is the preservation of the world."

We conserve "resources" for human benefit and we save pleasing scenery to gratify our senses, but these are not the only reasons. Our minds and souls have roots in the untamed processes of nature. Preserving wilderness is human self-preservation.

What better image of old age could we hope for than the prospect of wisdom contemplating wilderness? Few treasures are more valuable than these two forms of complex maturity. The rest of us need to study and learn from both in an effort to enrich our lives and our world. In the end, wilderness is nature's way of being wise, and wisdom is the mind's way of being natural.

Who, then, are the philosophers for our time? To whose wisdom shall we turn? The immediate ancestors of the best thinking of our time are Joseph Wood Krutch and Lewis Mumford, the latter, happily, still with us and still at work. Then there was E. F. Schumacher, who in eminence stands alone. Next might come Wendell Berry (*The Unsettling of America*) and John and Nancy Todd of the New Alchemists. Appropriately, the philosophers of the present generation are at work on the land, each in intimate contact with various aspects of the natural systems, rendering the wisdom implicit in natural processes into ideas and principles that can be understood.

The epoch of withdrawal from nature in order to *think* is now over. The higher pragmatism of involvement in the work of the world is called for in the philosophers of the present. For illustration we present Bill Mollison, a sixth-generation Tasmanian who has been a fisherman, a fur-trapper, a forester, and a research naturalist. He is now teaching a system of agriculture based upon what he has learned from nature. It is called "permaculture," representing the creation of a climax relation between man and nature—the result of studying wilderness processes. Asked how his experience in the wilds of Australia affected his thinking, he said (in *Mother Earth News* for November-December 1980):

Everything I did, either in research or in fieldwork, indicated that there was something wrong with modern farming methods. For instance, every problem I found in commercial agribusiness was actually *caused* by the industry itself. . . . My last few years . . . were spent in the forest, observing plants and animal species on location . . . and there I learned that everything in nature is self-controlled and self-balancing.

You know, a lot of modern thought suggests that the planet—as a living organism—seeks to protect itself by rejecting any species that causes it harm. For instance, if cattle damage part of the earth, the harmed region will respond by growing thorn bushes and poisonous plants, thus rejecting the animals. Well, I think we—the members of the human race—are perilously close to being rejected by the earth in that same way . . . and quite rightly so, since we've created some *terrible* damage.

Bill Mollison worked out a system of gardening and agriculture that was on the right side of natural processes and demonstrated its value. Asked how his ideas were received, he said:

Well, I can only say that there was a stunned silence at first, since the concepts were seen as being terribly radical. The ideas were *intuitively* accepted very quickly, though, by nonprofessorial people. And many of the enthusiastic responses came from women . . . they seem to see immediately that we've got something here. On the other hand, scientists—male or female—*don't* see, mainly because they're used to teaching in a passive and nonreactive system. Such

individuals don't teach reactivity, and they don't practice activity. Everything is on the blackboard, and nothing is in the garden.

Briefly, on his work:

The word "permaculture" refers to an integrated, self-sustaining system of perennial agriculture . . . which involves a large diversity of plant and animal species. A permaculture is really a completely self-contained agricultural eco-system that is designed to minimize maintenance input and maximize product yield. In a permaculture, little wheels or cycles of energy are set up . . . and the system virtually *keeps itself going!* Essentially, it's a living clockwork that should never run down . . . at least as long as the sun shines and the earth revolves.

I like to call permaculture a "humane technology," because it's of human dimensions. By that, I mean that it deals in a very basic way with simple, living elements . . . so it's available to every man and woman. Permaculture doesn't involve some sort of complicated technology, as does even an electricity-producing windplant. Instead it's a *biotechnology* . . . which people can *intuitively* handle. . . . It's a concept that can be very easily transplanted or given away to anybody, too. In that sense, it can never be patented—because it's so readily available—nor *should* the idea be patented. . . .

It's consciously *designed* . . . and that alone makes it something brand-new. There's no real design in modern agriculture, you see . . . there doesn't seem to be any evidence of planning or thought in it at all! . . . In fact, I think a *revolution* in thinking would be the proper word to use . . . in the same sense as Masanobu Fukuoka uses it in his book, *The One Straw Revolution*. It's a move toward good stewardship of the earth *and* toward a sane society. Our present society, you see, is insane, and the stewardship we practice is horrific. . . . In fact, we don't actually *care* for our earth at all, but exploit our nonrenewable resources and waste our renewable ones.

Permaculture, however, represents an educational process that can lead us away from irresponsible thinking. Anyone who works with a permaculture goes through a learning experience that is complex and interdisciplinary . . . the very things that traditional education is not. In essence, it's an intellectual exercise. Instead of wearing out our bodies in the garden, we use our minds. . . . The real labor of developing a permaculture is not in *doing* it,

but in thinking about what one is going to do. One's major energy, then, is devoted to the initial designing of the system, not to the maintenance of it. . . . The underlying philosophy of permaculture is the same as Fukuoka's: working *with* the land, not against it.

Fukuoka's book was reviewed in MANAS for Feb. 11; and last week's *Frontiers* told where to get Bill Mollison's *Permaculture Two*. A reading of these works will show why we identify such men as the philosophers of our time, in terms of the assumptions they have adopted for their life and their work.

## *REVIEW*

### ABOUT IRAN—SOME CURRENT HISTORY

READING *Tell the American People—Perspectives on the Iranian Revolution*, edited by David Albert, is something of a chore for a reviewer, not because it is uninteresting—it is *intensely* interesting—but because the complexity of its contents is difficult to convey. Some things, of course, stand out as of primary importance, and we'll tell about them, but the variety of approaches in this book—there are seventeen contributors, each one requiring reflective attention—renders simple summary impossible. Yet the depth of the contributions makes the book's unusual value. The careful reader will be able to say, "Now I am beginning to understand how the Iranians feel, how they think, and why they behave as they do." The writers are American, Islamic, and Iranian. Some are professors, some are journalists, some Imams, some talented American women.

Jim Wallis, an American editor (of *Sojourners*, a Christian magazine), sets the stage for beginning our inquiry:

Most Americans seem genuinely astonished at the depth of the Iranian people's anger toward the United States. Confused and defensive, they appear quite unable to understand why their country has been singled out for attack and wonder aloud, "Who do these people think they are?" This may be the most significant thing to recognize in the present crisis, for it demonstrates that the American people have not come to terms with the role of their government in the world.

Most of the contributors describe what the role has been in Iran. Wallis's summary is concise:

In August of 1953, the nationalist prime minister of Iran, Mohammed Mossedegh, was overthrown. The coup was organized by Kermit Roosevelt of the Central Intelligence Agency, a grandson of another Roosevelt who was also quite experienced in intervening in the affairs of other countries. Having been restored to power, a grateful Shah Reza Pahlavi told Mr. Roosevelt, "I owe my throne to God, my people, my army—and you."

From that day until he was forced to flee his country by a popular uprising last February [1979], the Shah's principal backer was the United States—politically, militarily, and economically. In exchange, the Shah supported American political and military interests in the area while pursuing Western-style capitalist development. Every Iranian knows this.

"Every Iranian" also knows that:

The chief beneficiaries of the arrangement were the Shah's family and the multinational corporations which did business in Iran. Corruption became a way of life in Iran as the royal family amassed a fortune estimated in billions of dollars, while the majority of the people remained poor. Traditional cultural and religious values were trampled on to make way for "modernization. "

The Shah's regime was brutal and dictatorial. It has been said that every family in Iran was touched by the Shah's tyranny. Dissent from the policies of the government was not tolerated, and all opposition was crushed or exiled. Shah Reza Pahlavi personally ordered the torture and execution of many thousands of his own people. The evidence documenting his atrocities is incontrovertible.

A quarter century of this corruption and political abuse is the root cause of the crisis we now face. [This article first appeared more than a year ago.]

To hold 50 American hostages responsible for the crimes others have committed is unfair and cruel. These unfortunate persons and their families have become the victims and pawns of much larger emotional and political forces. Their safety and release must remain a central priority.

But to isolate the taking of hostages as the only real issue involved insults the Iranian people and puts the hostages in greater jeopardy.

Jim Wallis points out that the Carter administration refused to "discuss the demerits of the Shah's regime," despite the fact that only "an honest recognition of the past could be the basis for beginning real negotiations with the Iranians." Musing, the writer asks:

What if we asked the Iranian people to forgive us for installing and maintaining the Shah, for interfering in their country, for profiting from their poverty, for corrupting their traditional values, for equipping and training the police that tortured and

killed them? . . . However, the U.S. political climate is not very congenial to the spirit of reflection and repentance. Instead the cry is to get tough and show the world that we can't be pushed around. The volatile responses of an insecure superpower sensing its loss of control in the world hold great potential for violence.

We turn now to a Pakistani writer, Eqbal Ahmad, a Fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., whose paper, "Iran and the West: A Century of Subjugation," first appeared in March, 1980. He points out that while we think of our government as the elected constitutional government, the Iranians have been obliged to recognize as representing the United States "the invisible government, the government of intelligence operatives: part of the CIA, defense intelligence, national security agencies and so on." How can the sufferers of a tyranny which lasted over a quarter of a century distinguish between our nominal "good government"—abstract, ideal, and non-functional for them—and the Machiavellians whose policies gave the Shah such unlimited power over their lives? This is the question that needs to be kept in mind as we wonder why the Iranians are so angry.

Mr. Ahmad asks:

What happened when the Shah came to New York? Most people have forgotten, and the media do not remind us. For 13 long days the Iranians did everything that everybody said they ought to have done; peacefully, nonviolently and legally they protested the admission of the Shah and demanded that he be returned to Iran, or at least be expelled from the U.S. Their protests included two demonstrations that Khomeini called in Iran, one of which brought out some three and a half million people. These protests also included Iranian students' holding the Statue of Liberty for three days; other demonstrations from coast to coast; the closure of the Washington, D.C. Iranian Embassy for a day.

No one responded to these peaceful protests or to diplomatic representations. Then the hostages were taken, and America reacted with righteous outrage.

Now comes the part that throws a real light on how the Iranians think, along with many others in the Third world:

The simple point I am making is that, in a world in which people are finding it easier to organize, they are willing ultimately to take the last step when everything else fails. Neither in the developed countries nor in the undeveloped countries have we created the mechanism, the will and the capacity to respond to the peaceful, legitimate, rightful demands of people when they are properly, politically and nonviolently made. As long as we do not develop that, I don't think we have the right to one-sidedly invoke such things as international law.

Well, the American people don't know much about international law. Their response to the taking of the hostages grew out of the simple feeling: we *trusted* those people, we did not pull our embassy out of the country, and they stabbed us in the back.

What other way is there to look at what happened? Eqbal Ahmad says:

The Iranian taking of hostages is disliked by every third world *government*, as the vote in the United Nations indicates. But I tell you, [it was] liked by the *people* of the third world for one bad reason: They feel some pride that at least this one time the weak, the poor, the oppressed have openly violated international law, which they see as a law of the powerful for use against the weak. We of the third world ask: When the CIA went to destabilize the constitutionally elected government of Allende in Chile through people who were actually carrying diplomatic passports and diplomatic immunity, or when they destabilized the constitutional government of Mohammed Mossadegh, was that in accordance with international law? What's big about this Iran affair is that it's a weak, poor, undeveloped country that has now violated the law.

There are other valuable articles in this book—articles which give the details of the hideous work of SAVAK, the Shah's secret police, how they tortured systematically not simply to get people to talk, but sometimes only to establish fear of authority and gain general submission. (The victims, when they did not die, and were released, would tell others what they had endured.) The Shah, it should be remembered, was liked, admired, and respected, in all Iran, *only* by his family and relatives and the people on his payroll or who profited by supporting him. There

are articles on village life, on what "liberation" means for Iranian women, a contribution by Dr. Ali Shariati, the scholarly educator who taught the people the meaning of their revolution, and long quotations from Ayatollah Khomeini. Something of the feelings of devout believers in Islam can be understood from what these people say, and the explanations of other writers help, although much remains obscure.

In his introduction, David Albert, the editor, describes the policies of the Shah over twenty-five years and asks:

What has all this meant for the people of Iran? It has meant the number of villages reduced from 40,000 to 10,000 since 1963, and the swelling of the cities. Once food self-sufficient as late as the late 1950s, Iran had come to depend on massive foreign imports, much of which never got down to the people who needed it. . . . The people remained untrained, 60 per cent illiterate and, for the most part, ignored. For many, hunger became a fact of life even as the Gross National Product reached new heights.

Finally, in "Iran and the U.S. Press," Edward W. Said tells why we haven't learned any of these things from the press in the United States. There is a lot of shock in this book. It should be read by all who care about what the nation does in the name of the people. The paperback edition is \$4.95 (\$5.95 post paid) and may be purchased from the publisher, Movement for a New Society, 4722 Baltimore Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa. 19143.

## COMMENTARY

### "NOTHING BUT RIFLES AND BOMBS"

IN *Peace Is Our Profession*, an anthology of anti-war prose and poetry issued by East River Anthology, 75 Gates Ave., Montclair, N.J., 07042 (\$5.95), W. D. Ehrhart, a veteran of the Vietnam war, tells about one of his post-war experiences:

In the fall of 1976, I visited a journalism class at Pennridge High School in Perkasio, Pa., to talk about the Vietnam War. The first question I was asked was whether or not the anti-war movement in the United States had affected my morale while I was fighting in Vietnam.

I told the students that it had not, though we could not help being aware of the demonstrations. What had damaged our morale, I told them, was the discovery that the people we had been sent to defend did not want us there—and indeed, more often than not with good reason, hated us; that we had been ordered by our government to win the hearts and minds of the people of Vietnam with nothing but rifles and bombs and American arrogance; that what we were involved in had nothing to do with the cause of freedom and democracy and liberty for which I had enlisted in 1966 at the age of 17; that we were the Redcoats, not patriots, and that our national leaders had put us up to it; that we were killing and dying for something worse than nothing.

It was too much. He talked to bland faces, saying things that contradicted what was in their history books, which blamed the defeat on the bad morale of our troops because of anti-war demonstrations. The veteran drew a conclusion:

*We have taught our children nothing.* We have wrapped ourselves in the shame of our complicity and the pain of our own shattered illusions and the fear of reprobation from our neighbors and friends and colleagues and associates, and allowed our children's perceptions to be dictated by *The Deer Hunter*, and *The Daily Intelligencer* and the press releases of Jody Powell. . . . what have we given our children with which they might defend themselves against the stirring false words and shining false values utterly believed by false men and women who would make a nation born of revolution and liberation into a nation of sheep and followers?

Can we really afford to remain silent? Do we care so little for the next generation, and the one after

that, and the one after that? Does it really cost more than we are willing to bear to teach our children the truth? . . .

On the title page of *Peace Is Our Profession* is a quotation from Martin Buber: "Our statements often say what governments should do, or chiefs of state or heads of churches. But few of us state what we are willing to do."

## CHILDREN

### . . . and Ourselves

#### A FRIEND WE HAVEN'T MET

A MANAS reader—and a friend—has just brought us a notebook filled with the school work of a Vietnamese girl who lived in his apartment house—she has recently moved away. He found it lying on top of the contents of a trash barrel. The bright red binder attracted his attention, the contents even more. The work for a class in composition was done in 1978, two and a half years after she came to the United States as a refugee.

In a little essay titled "Hoping for a Day To Return," she says:

I feel like something is missing. Yes, I could not see a natural smile on our people. I could not see our custom fashions everyday, and also I could not hear the children speaking their own language when they are playing with their friends.

English is not as popular as French in our country. Many people came to the United States without knowing one English word. Today it is too late and too difficult for them to start to learn. Even me—seventeen years old—I still have some difficulty, especially in writing. Sometimes in my mind, I have many things I want to write, but when I start writing, I do not know how to express myself in English. Today, our young Viet-Nameese children learn English more easily, because they meet their American friends everyday, and they go to American school while they are still young. But they will forget their own culture, their own race and their own language after a period of time. Mostly their parents are busy working. They do not have much time to teach their children to speak and write their own language. I feel it is a shame to our culture and to our race. Because we do live in a foreign land long enough, our life is not as stable as we were, we can not offer to build a school to teach our kids more about our language and our history. . . .

In another report she tells about her part-time job in a car wash, and why she asked to be paid in cash instead of by check:

First, United States is not my native country. Second, I am not a citizen yet, maybe in a few more

years I will be back in my homeland, and after being back, I will not be eligible for social security anymore. And finally, I have to be sixty-five or older or disability from work. But with this easy job I do not think I will get injured. With several reasons above, I rather saving more money than paying to the government.

Well, her English is coming along, also her Americanism. Next she tells how she was promoted to cashier in the car wash because the previous cashier was frightened away by a hold-up. The owner, she explains, taught her some rules to prevent another hold-up, and now, she says, "I am ready for the next robbery."

This seems a somewhat interesting yield from a trash barrel, but the real reason for quoting from this notebook appears in some "A" papers filled with little aphorisms which sound as if they came out of a Vietnamese "Bartlett's Familiar Quotations," if anything like that exists. Here are a few:

A lie has no legs. It requires other lies to support it, Tell one lie and you are forced to tell others to back it up.

To love and be loved is to feel the sun from both sides.

There's nothing that can help your beliefs more than trying to explain them to an inquisitive child.

A budget is what you stay within if you go without.

Many come to church to bring their clothes rather than themselves.

Nothing needs reforming as other people's habits.

One reason why a dog is such a loveable creature is that his tail wags instead of his tongue.

A foreigner is a friend I haven't met yet.

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; it's also what it takes, on occasion, to sit down and listen.

I am glad that I paid so little attention to good advice. Had I abided by it I might have been saved from some of my most valuable mistakes.

For adult education, nothing beats children.

Education makes people easy to lead, but difficult to drive, easy to grow but impossible to enslave.

From another "A" paper:

The young man knows the rules, but the old man knows the exceptions.

Love looks through a telescope, envy through a microscope.

Have character, don't be one.

On second thought, the quotation book must be in English. Anyway, selecting from it seems a not disgraceful way to earn an "A."

Next, we have some reminiscences by Ernest Morgan, son of Arthur Morgan of Antioch College and Yellow Springs, Ohio, both devoted scholars and laborers in behalf of community. In the January-February issue of the *Community Service Newsletter* (P.O. Box 243, Yellow Springs), he relates:

Once when I was in my teens I was driving with my father through a small western city and noticed that the river flowing down from the mountains passed through the town in a narrow, walled-in channel. My father was an authority on flood control and I was somewhat familiar with the field. I remarked to him, "Dad, aren't they going to have a flood here?" He said, "Yes, they are." And I said, "Shouldn't you tell them?" He said, "No, they won't take the matter seriously until after they've had a flood."

Our society has been on collision course with disaster for quite a while. A number of people have seen this and have tried to point it out, but until fairly recently they tended to be regarded as cranks. Even where they were recognized, the prevalent attitude has been that the reckoning was a long way off and in the meantime we would simply carry on as usual.

Breakdowns are coming, Ernest Morgan says, but that may not mean collapse. It is possible to make something valuable out of breakdown and partial collapse:

Let me tell you a little of my own experience in surviving collapse. My first experience occurred in 1929 in the stock market crash. I had established a small printing and publishing business, and was getting a modest flow of orders from all over the

country. The crash occurred in November, during the busy Christmas season when I had a good number of orders in process of being filled. Within 48 hours most of these orders had been cancelled, and the flow of new orders almost stopped. The business survived because our sales promotion had been done on a contingent basis whereby the staff agreed to accept subsistence pay for a season, with the understanding that they would receive a generous share of the profits, should sales materialize as expected. Until the moment of the crash they were materializing well, but after the crash they virtually ceased, with the result that the staff lost their gamble but kept their jobs. There was no complaint.

From that point on there was little more than subsistence for any of us. With a wife and three young children it was all I could do to keep the wolf from the door. Fortunately we owned a cottage on a modest piece of land near town and were able to revert to homesteading. With goats, chickens, bees and a garden, we were able to produce our own milk, meat, eggs, honey- fruit and vegetables. We even cut our own firewood and dug our own gravel. It was a strenuous life. Even with these resources our cash flow was insufficient to meet our essential needs, so we resorted to barter on a substantial scale, trading printing for other necessities. Our largest single barter was a book of poems for a black woman whose husband was a plumber. In exchange he helped us pipe water from our spring into the house. In the process we not only gained a water supply but some interesting friends as well.

Ernest Morgan continues, listing the requirements of survival during breakdown, to which cooperation (group action), vision, the will to survive, and skill and resourcefulness are the keys. These are essential elements in education for the future.

## FRONTIERS

### A Few Samples of a Mood

FIFTY or sixty years ago, the enthusiastic chroniclers of American Progress loudly celebrated the automobile as symbol of the magnificent mobility its invention had made possible. Now we can go anywhere we like—*fast*, they said—and it did seem like a pretty good thing. Today, people write about cars as practical necessities, the axes of our everyday lives, and the whole economy seems built on their use. As a nation, we'll do almost *anything* to assure that we'll have enough fuel in lean years to come. For this and a number of other reasons, there are those now saying that the automobile, so long regarded as a peculiarly American blessing, is an obvious *curse*. A recent letter from a reader begins:

I'm surprised that an intelligent publication like MANAS hasn't hit upon the problem and the solution. It's quite simple. Cars have to go.

How can you hope to have local self-government and village industry when folks can just get into their car and drive to the next county to buy mass-produced, plastic-packaged bread? What chance does the local baker have—or the neighborhood seamstress or neighborhood school? . . . Not the car, actually, is responsible, but we are, by our driving everywhere we want to go. . . . The solution is simple, ecological, revolutionary in a way no violent revolution can be, unifying (only massive cooperation will enable us to pull it off), health-promoting, and earth-friendly—namely, walking rather than riding.

The argument is developed, with attention (of course) to pollution and highway accidents. It will be best, the writer says, if we give up our cars voluntarily, before we are forced to by the changing conditions of survival. It should work, he says, if we all do it together. He concludes with a burst of eloquence:

What would Gandhi, or Thoreau, or Buddha, or Jesus say? Where would Jefferson stand on this one? Would Tom Paine write ads for GM? Would Socrates own a car?

He muses with delight that the oil companies would be the first to go broke.

Such appeals, while they leave out a lot, have enough truth in them to make people think. Simplifications have this value, whatever the practical objections to them. Meanwhile, the mood they represent is spreading. Another example is a letter in the Jan.-Feb. issue of the *Ecologist*, by a Canadian who says:

Your journal, books, FOE and all other groups (I belonged to three of them) did a tremendous job in awakening our consciousness to the dangers of our course. But now we know. It is boring to be told about the air, the water, the forests and the nukes. . . . What old-timers want to know is what to do and how to do it. A blueprint for survival for the family and the individual. . . . Our personal changes are the only ones we control. All others can be wiped out with a stroke of the pen by a new president or legislator.

People's spirits are not kindled by warnings, they are kindled by challenges. . . . Let's bring ecology down to the level of personal action and reaction.

Robert Allen writes: "The way to save the world is to invent and apply patterns of development and also conserve the living resources essential for human survival and wellbeing." True, but what rubbish to say in a popular or should-be-popular magazine! Who, I pray, can and will react to that? However, if Robert Allen had told me that he boycotts beef, lives in a communal house, and walks five miles to work in second-hand army boots, I would have been very interested and perhaps stimulated to do the same. . . .

Please shift your emphasis from the it to the us. It is us who use the paper and lumber and eat the steer and drink the coffee. We are the culprits, because nobody would bother cutting a single twig if he can't sell it and make money. Oversimplification? Yes, but take it as food for thought.

Then, in *Resurgence* for November-December 1980, John Seymour wrote:

As we hoe our turnips the reasoning part of our minds takes a rest and we can allow our being to be truly aware of the fields around us, and the woods, and the marshes and the hills, and the Life in these things, and feel aware that we are part of this Life, not a special part, just a part, and that our reason has been given us so that we may play our part well and honestly to further the purposes of the Life Force.

Books, words, reasoning—these things can never develop this consciousness in us. Hoeing turnips, lovingly nurturing plants and animals, watching and *feeling* the turn of the seasons, feeling the life-and-death-and-life-and-death that goes on all around us, forever and ever, and we are part of it: these activities and non-activities can reawaken our hearts and spirits and enable us to see the Universe with the inner eye.

So let us come back to our birthright: let us repair the ruined smallholdings and cottages again, and build new ones, and bring such pressure to bear on our "masters"—on the great know-all Nanny of the government—such as will bring about the release of the empty acres for the good purposes of Nature and of Mankind.

An example of another sort: Bill Durland, attorney for the Center on Law and Pacifism, tells in the Feb. 1 *Friends Journal* about some Quakers who have extended their conscientious objection to taking part in war to the act of paying for it. They won't pay taxes that help to make war possible. They base their contention that they can't be legally forced to pay taxes for war on the Nuremberg judgment, in which the United States concurred, to the effect that: "The very essence of the charter is that individuals have international duties which transcend the national obligations of obedience imposed by the individual state." And they argue that the Constitution provides them with the right, under the law, to act according to their consciences in respect to paying military taxes. They maintain that this right is a *natural* right authenticated for American citizens by the Ninth Amendment, which "recognizes that there are certain fundamental, inalienable rights not enumerated in the Constitution which the people possess that are pre-existing to any constitution, are inherent in the individual, and are not subject to divestment either partially or completely by the state."

These Quakers said in their petition to the Supreme Court:

To finance and pay for any activity is to be a participant. To commission killing is to be guilty of killing. . . . That only a small number of Christians subscribe to the obvious does not reduce its

correctness. Nor should the growing recognition of the direct link of war taxes to bloodshed deter the Court from acknowledging the firepower of taxes, the culpability of the payee, and the genuine need of refusers for relief from the unjust practices and procedures of the Internal Revenue Service.

The Petition for Certiori, as they expected, was denied, but these Quakers will not pay taxes for war, whatever the courts say. There are a thousand or so other people who have taken this stand. They are described by John Junkerman in the *Progressive* for April, as "a small but persistent tax resistance movement in this country." The writer names ten groups that give counsel to potential tax-resisters. One of them is the Center on Law and Pacifism, P.O. Box 1584, Colorado Springs, Colo. 80901.