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THE CONCOURSE OF HIERARCHIES

HIERARCHY, by reason of its usage in theology ("a division of angels") and its application to the clergy of organized religion, is a term which obtains its current meaning mainly from abuses we should like to put an end to. To say that a group or association is determined to be "non-hierarchical" in its structure is equivalent to praise. This is a way of declaring that a human opinion must be respected simply because it is a human opinion—in short, part of the familiar argument about what "Equality" means, in the Declaration of Independence. As a New England workers' cooperative put it recently in a statement of intentions: "In our workplace we strive to create an atmosphere that is nonhierarchical, nonsexist, and non-ageist and which supports cooperation, mutual respect and trust, and creative individual initiative." Evidently, the term "Hierarchy" has become a practical synonym of arbitrary authority and potential exploitation, having about the same negative moral evaluation as "Aristocracy," which, as we all know, the American Revolution did away with for good and sufficient reason.

Yet, at the same time, there is a growing case for the idea of hierarchy in scientific literature. Hierarchy, it begins to appear, is an appropriate name for the way in which Nature arranges the elements and orders the processes of the universe. In a book published in 1969, *Hierarchical Structures* (Elsevier, edited by Lancelot Law Whyte, Albert G. Wilson, and Donna Wilson), L. L. Whyte (author of *The Next Development in Man*) provided a historical sketch:

> The term "hierarchy" is said to derive from PseudoDionysius. The idea runs from Plato, Aristotle, PseudoDionysius, with his angelic and priestly hierarchy, through medieval philosophers to the 15th-century thinkers of ihe Florentine Academy who began to loosen up the largely static classical hierarchy, and many German thinkers,. . . to Shapley (1930), for example, in our own century. I refer you to Lovejoy's *Great Chain of Being* (1936) and to a brief historical survey which I am publishing elsewhere (Whyte 1969). Towards the end of the 18th century the growing influence of Galileo, Kepler, Descartes, Newton, and their followers, blew away the scholastic hierarchies of angels, priests, and substantial forms, and thus left the field clear for hierarchy to stage a comeback in our century, as a type of dynamic and sometimes unstable spatial ordering which is recognized to pervade the universe (though still neglected by some sciences, for neither the term nor the explicit idea is to be found in most physics texts). Since around 1950, Plato's static hierarchy has come back, often as an unstable hierarchy of *processes.*
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> But is it a come-back? Did all mathematical physicists through the centuries from Galileo and Kepler to Einstein and Bohr entirely neglect this powerful idea? The answer is as one would expect: exceptionally imaginative minds recognized its power and amused themselves by trying to apply it. I take four examples: Newton (1705), Lambert (1761), Fournier d'Albe (1907), and Charlier (1908) made quantitative conjectures (rather close to the mark though the values of their parameters were not specified) about a hierarchical structuring of the physical universe. The idea of structural hierarchy was too interesting and fertile not to play with when *heterogeneity* had to be represented, and science is kept alive by intelligent conjectures of this kind.

After some notes on the ideas of the scientists named here, Whyte continues:

> I propose that the time has arrived for the gradual development of a comprehensive physical theory of the structural hierarchies of nature. . . . But let me state bluntly: spatial hierarchy does not imply anything homogeneous, monolithic, totalitarian, or derogatory to the human person himself, both as individual and as community, a concourse of hierarchies. I apologize for stating the obvious.

In conclusion Whyte points out that in the middle years of this century (1945-55), "the frontier of scientific thought moved rapidly forward and the presence of structural hierarchies in the universe, particularly in organisms and in

the cosmos, became a commonplace to many of those concerned with structure," although he adds that the concept cannot yet be called "established." But, he says, "the realm is now wide open, and interesting possibilities are in sight."

When we come to human beings and their decisions and behavior, the question grows enormously complicated. It seems nonetheless evident that in all practical affairs, hierarchical structure is tacitly taken for granted as representing the way things are. Even the militant critics of hierarchical social arrangements concede a sort of hierarchical structure in the ranges of opinion in such matters, for are they not implicitly claiming that *their* views are closer to truth—moral truth, that is—than what some of the defenders of hierarchy maintain?

After all, don't some people know better than other people? Is there such a thing as wisdom in the world, and is there any sense at all in which its possessors should be listened to more attentively than others? If this is not the case, then what is the point of having schools and universities?

Plainly in the foreground of this argument is the question, not just of authority, but of coercive authority. It is a familiar common-sense conclusion that the wise man should "have charge." After all, we hold elections to determine which ones are regarded as wise, and we then give them authority—sometimes quite a lot of authority. Whether the electorate is competent to distinguish between wise men and rascals or fools is of course a basic problem, but we have not allowed its implications to make us abandon democratic rule. Other systems are much worse.

Is there, then, authority which is not coercive? There is. People do not revere Socrates because he went about with a club to convert the Athenians to his views. We do not honor Abraham Lincoln because for a time he was Commander in Chief of the nation's armed forces. Among humans the claim of hierarchy is that some have better judgment than others, but to say this is not to urge that the judgments of the wise should be given the force of law. Why, after all, do the really wise refuse, as a rule, to compel? Why do they reject the uses of coercive authority? It was Gandhi's idea that the superior man is the man who rejects all power over others save disinterested persuasive power. For humans, Gandhi would say, only moral power—or, as he put it, "soul-force"—has legitimacy. And no one, he might add, has the right to push or cajole anyone else into conformity with his alleged "wisdom."

The multiple confusions which pervade everyday thinking about hierarchy—whatever it is called in everyday language—are made evident in one of the contributions to *Hierarchical Structures* concerned with human behavior. Magoroh Maroyama has this to say on "Patterns in Social Events":

> Epistemological discrepancies occur when the structure of the observer's model does not correspond to the structure of the event. For example, the observer may assume that a leadership structure exists in every group and proceed to analyze a basically non-hierarchical (bossless) group. He may invent criteria or measures of leaderness, apply them to the individuals in the group, and come up with an "answer" as to who is the leader. But what he is measuring may not be what he thinks can be inferred from the measurement. As another example, there was a prison inmate who was adept at listening to others' problems (like a psychiatrist). Guards observed that many other prisoners came to talk to him. Guards decided that he must be the gang leader and subsequently held him responsible as the leader of a riot with which he had nothing to do. Another example: two individuals acted as a team in shoplifting. One of them was a fast runner, and the other had a car, that is, they formed a division of labor. The runner shoplifted while the other cruised around to pick him up. On the record, the shoplifter was listed as the principal offender while the driver was listed as an accessory. Another example: Many civic administrators considered the 1967 riot in Detroit as having been caused by a small number of "leaders" or "agitators," whereas no such structure existed among the rioters and looters. Another example: In traditional Navaho society a young man may seek advice from an experienced old man

without having to obey the advice. The old man's position is that of a counselor without coercive power, but unsophisticated outsiders would tend to see such a man as a leader.

Perhaps the goal should be—not to try to establish hierarchy as a principle of social ordering and not to attempt to abolish it—but rather to learn how to think about hierarchy as something that is always present and functional in some way or other in everything we do. A constitution, for example, is one way of rationalizing hierarchy in human relations. It is a means of establishing foci of authority and of limiting their power to prevent its misuse. Yet the offenses of authority in constitutionally organized affairs are too well known to need description.

During the early days of the New Left a determined attempt was made by the active participants to do away with hierarchical structure, to reach decisions through consensus, and to discourage the conventional forms of "leadership." It didn't work, according to those who reviewed the history of the New Left, starting, say, with the justly admired Port Huron Statement of 1962. Because there was no acknowledged structure, and only the assumption of "participatory democracy," the leadership became covert, and therefore unaccountable, with generally disastrous results. Another difficulty was the lack of any social theory. As George Benello put it in *The New Left* (Porter Sargent, 1969): "The original intuition of the New Left, which saw a society of participation as the goal, and sought ways to work toward such a society, was correct, in my view. The trouble is that intuition lacked any articulation in terms of an analysis of the social order and how to change it."

In the same book Barbara and Alan Haber report on a conference of Radicals in the Professions:

> The sense of crisis that people brought to the conference comes out of real conditions in their lives. On the one hand many of us can no longer tolerate psychologically the demands of orthodox jobs or the training they require. Radical consciousness has produced a painful awareness of the personal emptiness and social evil of most traditional career patterns—even those not directly involved in making and administering policy for government, the military and industry. The movement has created a generation of people who expect their work to be what most jobs in our society are not: radically relevant; personally challenging and expressive; free from bureaucratic control, open to spontaneous Innovation.

What might be regarded as a sequel to *The New Left* came out ten years later—*Co-ops, Communes & Collectives* (Pantheon, 1979), edited by John Case and Rosemary Taylor. In this book one contributor, Jane Mansbridge, examined the experience of that generation in a paper called "The Agony of Inequality." She began with a text quoted from the Bread and Roses Collective, a women's group in Boston, who declared in 1971: "The ideals of radical democracy [include] an equality in which no one is allowed to dominate others even by such intangible qualities as verbal facility, flashy personality, or strength of ego." Then the writer says: "Perhaps the most persistent problem confronting the alternative organizations and radical collectives of the late 1960s and early 1970s was their inability to ensure that every member exerted equal power over every decision." To illustrate with a case study, Jane Mansbridge described a Chicago organization called Helpline which had a staff of forty-one. This group "ran a twenty-four-hour switchboard for drug and crisis counseling, a medical emergency van, a house for runaways, and a commune counseling and placement project." The services were needed and valuable. After ten pages on how these people worked together and what their problems were, the writer summarizes her conclusion:

> What this collective learned from its seven-year experience, most collectives never learn before they collapse in agony over their internal inequalities. Helpline learned to decentralize radically, to groups of five to twelve. They learned some basic lessons of group process. They learned to listen, and how to say when they felt they had not been listened to. They learned the perils of a large public assembly,

augmenting it with representative committees and breaking the assembly down into small groups.

But they were lucky. By self-selection and good fortune, these forty-one people had also come together in circumstances that fostered the three conditions of identity of interests, equal respect, and personal growth. When all their techniques did not produce perfect equality of power, they could be genuinely comfortable with the still quite noticeable inequalities that remained. . . .

The lesson of this analysis is that collectivities should look to the ends, rather than fixating on the means. They should insist on equal power only if it is the easiest available way of generating equal respect and opportunities for growth. . . . When interests diverge frequently in ways that become irreconcilable, an organization that takes equal power seriously must revive much of the paraphernalia of liberal democracy.

A collective, you could say, starts out as a society of equals—that is, the members are adults. What about hierarchy in the schoolroom? What should be the teacher's role?

In a book review in *Peace News* (Aug. 31, 1979) Michael Randle notes Hannah Arendt's comment on teachers in American schools, who had, she said, abandoned the attempt to exercise authority, with the result that, far from freeing him, left the child "subject to the tyranny of its peers." The child can neither rebel against this tyranny nor reason with it. "So he must either conform or take refuge in juvenile delinquency."

Another example, quite different, was the situation in A. S. Neill's Summerhill school, where democracy "was established through certain formal rules and procedures." Michael Randle says:

The result bore no resemblance to the situation described by Arendt because the authority of the school meeting was not anonymous, its rules were based on explicit reasons and could be amended, and the procedural rules provided some guarantee of individual rights. As Neill saw, it was important that the older and younger children participate in the school assembly, because in this way not only were the younger children initiated into the process of democratic self-management, but the tendency toward gang rule, most prevalent among this age group, could be kept in check. Finally the participation of the teachers, and the residual authority exercised by Neill himself, meant that the staff did not evade their responsibilities.

Why did this work so well at Summerhill? Michael Randle suggests:

Summerhill comes close to an example of direct democracy and this in its pure form does not constitute authority but rather the libertarian alternative to it. But it is important to note, firstly, that it does require a minimum of procedural rules. Secondly, in its pure form it can only exist within small-scale and closely-knit groups and communities.

We can perhaps conclude from all this—and from other ranges of experience not noted here—that hierarchy is a fact of nature and of human life, that the problem is not to try to get rid of it but to recognize its good and bad forms. Some general statements might be made. First, that in so-called "traditional societies," the authority of hierarchical relations is established overtly, from without. Each member grows up with the idea that there are grades of authority to be obedient to. The castes of India and the estates of Europe are examples of the imposition of external hierarchy, once acknowledged and respected. Then, for well known reasons, the Buddha and Gandhi strove to do away with the external definition of caste, and the eighteenth-century revolutionists pretty well succeeded in putting an end to the privileges of European nobility and kings.

But these reforms did not put an end to human excellence, nor, for some, to its inherent obligations in the form of *noblesse oblige.*

The duties prescribed for the superior man by the traditional societies—in the East, the role of teacher for the members of the Brahmin caste, and the rejection by the Buddhist *Bodhisattva* of the promised reward of Nirvana, which he gives up in order to bring others to the threshold of liberation—become a voluntary life against the grain of the times during epochs of hard-headed rationalism. There is thus a double standard for the superior man: he gives, but he does not

receive. His labors, except by the few, are not appreciated.

Interestingly, in his analysis of Eschylus' *Prometheus Bound* (*Prometheus,* Washington University Press, 1968), Eric Havelock speaks of the drama as showing that the Promethean sacrifice is far from appreciated:

> Its actors, with varying degrees of irony or protest, all give witness that philanthropy is not requited, that the benefactor is evilly treated, that pity wins no pity in return, almost as though this were a historical law. It is not suggested by the victim that his benevolence was mistaken. He nowhere expresses regret for his policies. Rather, the drama seems designed to reconcile the Promethean to carry this burden of non-requital, as if it were a functional element in his task. And this is true. "Working in actual history, the Promethean intellect can never be repaid for its services, for if it were, the services would be recognized in the category of the familiar, would have to be short range. They would therefore lose that touch of imaginative science which makes them Promethean.

Havelock finds Prometheus to be the type of superior man belonging to the rational, scientific age:

> Prometheus symbolizes the passion appropriate to western scientific civilized man. But his creator, by making him the primaeval son of Earth the Wise, older than Zeus, strives to suggest that what suffers here on the rock is not a temporary accident of historical development, but a moral principle, a cosmic law.

There is, then, at least a substantial classical ground for regarding hierarchy as an expression of the natural moral order in human development, with reason to define its content in terms of its nobilities instead of its perversions and abuse. Meanwhile, it is pertinent to observe that the modern age has not been without examples of Promethean sacrifice and service. The best humans have responded to this call.

REVIEW
BRIARPATCH

FOR some time now, the Briarpatch "movement"—it deserves the honorific, however obscure its organization—has been for us little more than an intriguing rumor, with sources such as occasional mention in *CoEvolution Quarterly* and issues of the *Whole Earth Catalog.* Close to a year ago we began a small campaign to secure a review copy of *The Briarpatch Book,* involving locating the publisher and a letter or two, and now, at last, we have been rewarded with the paperback edition—$8.00 from Volcano Press, 330 Ellis Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94102. The *Briarpatch Book,* made up of material from past issues of *Briarpatch Review*—a magazine with a name invented by Dick Raymond of Portola Institute in Menlo Park (Calif.)—has contents by and about the people who are part of the Briarpatch Network. These are individuals and small groups in the Bay Area of San Francisco who go into business to do something that seems worth doing, with "profit" no more than a synonym of survival. An introduction by two of the editors, Michael Phillips and Rasberry, gives this bit of history:

> Dick's Briarpatch idea grew out of his image of a dinosaurlike demise of existing large businesses. In his first visions of the Briarpatch he saw the giant corporate dinosaurs unable to find food for their enormous profit appetites. He visualized a business apocalypse, using such terms as "living with joy in the cracks" to describe the new subsociety in which "the cracks" referred to his apocalyptic earthquake image. The Briarpatch was to be the social system for survival, with Briars using the tools of living on less, sharing with each other, and learning through new small business. To this, Dick added the positive value of doing it all with joy. In his vision, Briars were to be doing what they loved most, secure from the ravages of the crumbling culture around them. Their lack of material possessions and small-scale living would appear to others like real briarpatches—thorny places so unappealing to the greedy people around them that, like rabbits, Briars would be safe.

Michael Phillips became a financial wizard for aspirants to Briarship. He wrote *The Seven Laws of Money,* a treatise embodying the economic sagacity of a morally intelligent life, in which he described the Briarpatch idea.

More history:

> Dick lived south of San Francisco in suburban Menlo Park, where the very first Briarpatch journal was compiled by Norman Gurney. Gurney edited and published this first journal called the *Briarpatch Review* and sent it free to a select mailing list of friends and users of the Whole Earth Truck Store. . . . His *Briarpatch Review* described the new Briarpatch Autocoop, which had started that summer in Menlo Park, the Zen Center in San Francisco, and various Portola projects. . . . However, Gurney moved on, and there was no community in Menlo Park to put out a second issue.
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> A sustained *Briarpatch Review* needed a real Briarpatch network to nourish it, and San Francisco was the ideal community in which such a network could be created. The two principals in that venture were Andy Alpine, a former lawyer and researcher, and me. We both lived in San Francisco and had met while working on another project. We got along wonderfully, and I hired Andy to do some work for me in sex research and to search for a waterfront office where I could offer small-business counseling. Andy finished the research and found the office by May 1974, and I opened the office in June.

There is more interesting personal stuff on how the *Review* got going again, and about the people involved, with the following note on the book, which shows the mood of Briarpatch undertakings:

> Why price our books at exactly $8.00 (softcover) and $15.00 (hardcover)? Traditionally, publishers and booksellers would recommend prices of $7.95 and $14.95 so that the books would appear to be in the cheaper $7 and $14 price ranges. Based on this kind of thinking, products sold in our culture are priced at $3.99, $6.99, etc; so why aren't we doing It?
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> It is important to Briars that the integrity of our lives carry over into our businesses. Following the example of Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog,* we are open and accessible in every way. The openness in business that so clearly joins us together extends to our pricing. Cutting one cent off to make something appear less expensive is part of a deceptive game that many business people play and that we in Briarpatch discourage. In our culture, we don't use deceptive pricing in "professional" relationships between client and supplier. For example, there is never a $19.95 charge for a visit to a dentist or veterinarian. We

would be embarrassed by such phoniness. In Japan, a culture noted for its honesty, all prices are in round numbers; we know this could be a business reality in our country.

The Introduction concludes:

We have raised our flag. If you are an alternative business person and are committed to service through creative labor, we welcome your support, articles, and comments. Join us, please, and subscribe if you want to become more directly involved.

That was written in 1978, when the book first came out.

There may be those who will ask: How can you believe that there are such people? Why wouldn't they all go broke?

Well, we believe in them. It doesn't make sense not to believe. And after all, every right-thinking person who has spent time in business has experienced dreams of a Briarpatch sort, and why shouldn't there be a few people in California who start acting out such dreams, and are smart enough to make them work?

The language in the book is good—free, easy, but not sloppy or jargony. To read it, page by page—which is easy enough, since everything is done in inviting magazine layout—is to be haunted by that line of Miranda's in *The Tempest*—"Oh brave new world, that has such people in't!"

This seems enough to say to get people to buy the book.

People have been talking for years about necessary changes in our society, and since, as Calvin Coolidge declared over half a century ago, the business of America is "business," why shouldn't the changes begin there? What better or more influential place to start?

Americans have also been called a nation of lawyers, and one of the nice things about the Briars is that they hold legalisms and contractual arrangements to a minimum. The Briarpatchers are trusting souls, but being also smart they are not easy marks. America, you could say, is also a nation of con men. The religion of American business is advertising, and that, too, the Briarpatch contingent is forthrightly against—all two or three hundred. Is that all! No, that's not all, since there are other people around the country who are doing it too, on their own. How does one take part in Briarpatch enterprise? By deciding to. There is nothing to sign, except perhaps a check for a subscription to *Briarpatch Review*—supposing it is still going. What are the contents of the paper like? We have space for one sample—a story by Phillips headed, "A Restaurant That Does Everything Wrong":

If a conventional restaurateur were to describe the Communion Restaurant in San Francisco, he or she would probably say in tones of incredulity: "This restaurant isn't to be believed; they've done every single thing wrong."

Like what? "First they opened it in the wino section of town; second, they have enough space to seat about 60 people but the tables are so far apart they only handle 40 people at a time; then there are all sorts of special oddities."

Such as?

"No smoking, *no talking*, no shoes in the part of the restaurant that's Japanese style, and no bus boys; when you've done eating you take your own dishes to the kitchen and put the cloth napkin in a bag. There are no paintings on the walls, no music, and most incredible of all, no cashier. The cash register is an open box where you make your own change."

That is incredible, and it's not all. The Communion serves Indian food—chapatis, curry, and such—changing only the vegetables, and you may eat as much as you need. The Briar restaurateurs originally charged 80 cents for all this, then when they made more money than they could use they dropped the price to 60 cents.

Then, later on, when they began to have too many customers to serve properly, they raised the price to cut down the volume. And, as of writing this book, they were looking for a farm they could afford to buy, to start producing food from scratch. One hopes Communion is still going in San Francisco, and still has the same principles, but wherever its founders are, we are confident they are doing something pretty good. We hope talk of this sort about the restaurant is permissible.

COMMENTARY
A WANING ENTHUSIASM

IN an apt summary of the objections to nuclear power (in the *Los Angeles Times* for Aug. 2), Amory and Hunter Lovins point out that "Nuclear power is dying of an incurable attack of market forces." Only in the centrally planned economies—where political interest outweighs economic intelligence—are serious expectations of nuclear power maintained. Nuclear power cannot compete with other remedies for the shortage of energy sources. Lovins, who has been shown to be careful in the use of figures, says that—

> nuclear power is and will remain a tiny part of total energy supply. In Japan, it now delivers half as much energy as renewable sources; in the United States about half as much as wood alone. In the European Economic Community, nuclear growth from 1974 to '78 yielded less than a tenth as much new energy as growth in energy productivity. In the United States in 1979, government figures show that energy savings fueled 98% of our economic growth, outpacing *all* expansion of energy supply, including nuclear power, by more than 50 to 1.

The domestic record lends no support to arguments for nuclear power:

> Official U.S. nuclear forecasts for the year 2000 have fallen eightfold since 1974, with at least 50 more reactors cancelled than ordered. Strikingly, the collapse has been virtually identical throughout the world's market economies including those with no regulatory impediments to building reactors (Canada) or to raising utility rates (West Germany).

Other considerations:

> Nuclear advocates say denuclearization is utopian and foolish in a world short of oil. They fail to note, however, that nuclear power is uneconomic and is largely irrelevant to the oil problem. It offers the wrong kind of energy—too little and too late, at far too high a cost. Less than a tenth of the world's oil generates the form of energy—electricity—that nuclear power supplies. Even in this limited role, new nuclear power plants are, and have been since 1975, uncompetitive (despite subsidies halving their apparent cost) with new and relatively clean coal plants. (Existing but idled coal plants could more than replace all the oil-fired plants.) Here and abroad, renewable sources now available can also provide larger, cheaper and faster electrical supplies than can nuclear power.
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> But supporters of nuclear expansion face an ever-greater hurdle. Electricity constitutes only 8% of our energy needs. The other 92% of our energy is needed for heat and mobility. In these uses, any new power station, even a nuclear one, is so uneconomic that it would be cheaper to write off a newly built plant than to run it—its running costs alone would exceed the costs of improvement in energy productivity to provide the same services. Thus nuclear investments actually slow down oil replacement by diverting resources from other measures (such as making buildings and cars more efficient) which, in any country, can save vastly more oil, years earlier and at a tenth of the cost.

Such common sense can hardly be defied for very long.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
THREE CLIPPINGS

THERE was a time, not very long ago, when the ways of the United States were a model to other countries. Now it is getting to be the other way around. Recently the Potomac Institute of Washington, D.C., described West Germany's alternate service program for conscientious objectors, saying: "Nowhere else is the right of young people to express their service obligation in non-military terms so fully recognized." The West German constitution declares that "no one may be compelled against his conscience to render war service involving the use of arms."

Some figures are given on the draft in West Germany by Harry Trimborn, a correspondent of the *Los Angeles Times* (Dec. 12, 1980). About 450,000 young men (between 18 and 26) become eligible each year for service, and about 190,000 are inducted for a term of fifteen months. Of these, according to Hans Iven, federal commissioner of the program, about 40,000 apply for conscientious-objector status by writing to the Defense Ministry. The *Times* story continues:

> Applicants and any witnesses they choose are brought before a local examining board consisting of a high-ranking civilian legal expert in the ministry, an official of each applicant's home state and two citizens chosen in local elections. The ministry official chairs the meeting and provides legal advice, but does not have the power to accept or reject the application. That must be done by a majority of the three other members, who are influenced, however, by the chairman's advice.
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> In addition to general religious or moral opposition to bearing arms, exemption may also be granted because of opposition to specific roles that the *bundeswehr*—the armed forces—may be called upon to perform. For example, an applicant may not be against bearing arms in principle, but may object to participation in a specific war, as some Americans did during the Vietnam War. He may be granted exemption in order to avoid the possibility of having to fight against other Germans—those in communist East Germany, who are legally considered citizens of undivided Germany.
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> Since 1967, exemption may be granted on grounds of personal political conviction, but not merely because of membership in anti-war, political or other groups. If the board—one among 1,110 in the country—rejects the application, the applicant may appeal to a second commission, composed of the same type of members. There are 30 such bodies and they can over-rule the lower commissions.
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> If conscientious objector status is still denied, the applicant can then appeal through the country's regular court system all the way to the federal constitutional court, the nation's highest. However, Iven said, no case has ever gone as far as this tribunal.
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> If an applicant refuses alternative service, a rarity, criminal prosecution is initiated.
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> C.O.'s must serve for 16 months, a month longer than the regular military service. The extra month is to compensate for the reserve duty that is mandatory after military service. They receive the same pay and benefits they would receive in the armed forces, with adjustments made for the food, clothing and shelter received by servicemen. Like servicemen, they receive regular increases. And like military reservists, the CO's may be returned to active duty in times of emergency to replace those who are called to arms.

What do the CO's actually do as alternative service? Harry Trimborn's story begins with an account of the life of Peter Hummes, who one day each week goes to the home of an elderly couple (in Bendorf, near Koblenz) where he washes dishes and does other household chores, sometimes some cleaning. His week is filled with this sort of help to handicapped families unable to care for themselves. He serves as a member of the Mobile Social Assistance Service, along with other conscientious objectors and volunteers, including women, who help their countrymen in this way.

The report continues:

> Each year, more and more young West German men choose alternative service when they are called for induction. Today, about 35,000—15,000 more than in 1970—serve in more than 11,000 facilities

throughout the country. These include hospitals, orphanages, nurseries, homes for the aged and the handicapped, recreation centers, mental institutions, and rescue services.

During last year, when the Mobile Social Assistance Service was begun, more than 2,000 young men took part in the program. The administrator, Hans Iven, is quoted as saying:

> This is a very interesting development. It enables our people to care for the handicapped and elderly right in their own homes. It avoids the necessity and expense of institutionalizing them and avoids the psychological hardships of removing people to an unfamiliar environment. The personal contact between the helper and the helped often develops into friendship.

The reporter remarks that the right to be a conscientious objector in West Germany reflects "the country's determination to prevent a resurgence of militaristic tradition," and Hans Iven said that alternative service has become "a generally accepted part of national life." He observed that while there is some hostility toward conscientious objectors, "this still exists only among the elderly and is dying out," and he added: "These young men are highly idealistic and motivated. Why should the country not take advantage of this for the benefit of society?"

Another L.A. *Times* (Jan. 21 of this year) story by William Rasberry tells about a two-year study by Mary R. Harvey on the public-school teaching of low-income children. She found that teachers commonly assume their pupils "are less capable and more in need of behavioral management" than children from families with higher incomes. The consequences are far-reaching:

> For example, teachers praised nonattentive children for "being quiet" while those volunteering answers were criticized for their enthusiasm and told to "sit down." "Behaviors which were 'appropriate but active' seem to have been likely targets of teacher criticism in low-income classrooms, Harvey says, "and behaviors which were inappropriate but passive" were likely targets of praise.
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> Low-income children, in short, were being taught to be passive, teacher-dependent, and uncreative. The reason, Harvey believes, is that both black and white teachers are taught—by teachers' colleges and by society at large to take a "clinical" approach toward low-income children, to "treat" them for their supposed cultural deficits. "Nobody seems to have tested the kids-are-kids hypothesis," she said.

For a final item this week we quote an Alabama schoolteacher's report, appearing in No. 18 of *Growing Without Schooling:*

> My 5th grade class was very interested in the Bicentennial in 1976. After several days of discussing the American Revolution, the Boston Tea Party, Stamp Act, etc., I gave the required quiz. One of the questions was: "What is a boycott?" Now, this was a fifth grade in an all-black school in Birmingham, Alabama. Out of 30 kids, only two explained the word in terms of the Stamp Act and American boycott of English imports. The other 28 said—and I quote—"It's when you ain't gonna ride the bus no more."
>
> For about two minutes that answer puzzled me, then it hit me—what else would you expect black Alabama 11-year-olds to say? They had heard about the Montgomery bus boycotts that helped to start the Civil Rights movement since they were born. Of course that's what it means. I grabbed the chance to use it and we compared the 1770s to the 1960s and I saw eyes all over the room light up—the ah-hah! look. It was wonderful.
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> I was so excited about it, I told the whole story in the afternoon faculty meeting. Everyone, including the black principal, was much more concerned that the students didn't answer the question "RIGHT." I was instructed to mark 28 answers wrong so they would learn to pay attention and "get their lessons."
>
> I didn't do it; instead I quit in January before the birth of our first child and decided then and there both of us would stay home. We've been learning together ever since. . . .

FRONTIERS

Two Kinds of Champion

THE emergence of a strong but not yet politically effective environmental movement in Japan is the subject of an article in *Environment* for last March. The writer is Toshio Hase, who lives in Kyoto. Its causes, he says, are two. Primary is the sudden economic development of Japan since World War II, which has been accompanied by a serious pollution. The other factor has been constitutional reform, which allows protest "to take various forms, including the use of the courts and what is now commonly referred to as 'direct action'."

The author summarizes Japan's "progress":

> Due to a combination of hard work, good discipline, and worker-management loyalty, Japan surged ahead in economic growth, improving its GNP by 9.6 annually during the period 1950-1974. In 1977 there were 33 million cars in the country, as compared with a mere 3 million in 1960; energy consumption grew by 11.6 per cent annually between 1960 and 1970.

This record may excite national pride, but its price in pollution has other effects.

> In December 1977, there were 368 law suits pending against such development, though there are many more conflicts that fall short of formal litigation. . . . The extent of the harm is now so great that even Japanese of modest means and mild dispositions are protesting over pollution and demanding compensation for injury. These demands do not fit well with existing laws or government policies which were not designed for this kind of reaction. So the sufferers have had to stand up for their own rights and organize their own political and legal protests. As harm becomes more widespread, increasing numbers of citizens are beginning to doubt the validity of economic growth. Thus, the environmental movement gains more support and challenges the very goals of government.

What has happened in Japan? The loss of agricultural land to urban development, quite serious in a small country, is a continuous process. The metropolitan areas of Tokyo and Osaka have "virtually no natural vegetation." Poisoning by industrial chemicals has shocked the country. A map shows that hardly any area in the whole country has been without debilitating or even lethal pollution. Both illness and death from mercury poisoning in one area, and nerve-wracking noise over new airports are among the well known disasters, leading to rage and protest. Toshio Hase says:

> Although such protests may be embarrassing, they have not noticeably changed the pro-growth policies of the government. The polluting industries also have not readily admitted liability. Even in the face of strong complaints from the victims of their pollution, industrial executives refuse to meet with the protesters. When summoned before the courts they try hard to avoid admitting any responsibility. And, when the sufferers ask for information concerning what pollutants are being discharged and what their health effects might be, they are blocked by the laws of commercial confidentiality.

The unions, which seem mostly company unions, are little help since the members care more about their jobs than the effects on others of what they do. The consequences of pollution are not light. The writer gives four examples, of which the worst is mercury poisoning:

> The Chisso Corporation in Minimata, Kyushu, poisoned plankton and fish with mercury for more than 20 years. As a result of eating the fish, several thousand fishermen and their families suffered the agonies of mercury poisoning—aching limbs, partial paralysis, and partial blindness. This illness was also discovered in the Niigata Prefecture in Northern Japan, where the Showa Electric and Chemical Company also polluted the river with mercury-laden wastes; in this case 50 people died and 669 were crippled, according to official estimates. But the number of injuries is probably far greater, as the government used a very narrow, rather too precise definition for the identification of Minimata disease.

The Japanese environmental movement is not unified but made up of local and regional groups with varying concerns and complaints. Two hundred and eighty such groups gathered in November of 1978 to form a national organization, but the campaign for defense of the environment continues to be an expression of local interests, showing "vitality, imagination, and

originality—which the government and other political parties lack." Toshio Hase says:

> The Japanese environmental movement is basically comprised of numerous ad hoc groups formed voluntarily and spontaneously to fight predominantly local environmental issues. The novelty here is that this kind of organization is rather unique in Japanese history. Most of the groups are neither bureaucratic nor hierarchical, but operate openly flexibly, and with a courteous informality which epitomizes the kind of grassroots democracy the members wish to see expanded throughout the nation. The key to these organizations is good leadership and a small but dedicated membership. (In 1975 the Japanese Environmental Agency estimated that there were 1,286 such groups in the country; but this is an under-estimate, as many of the smaller—although locally quite influential—bodies were not included in the tabulation.)
>
> One can divide the Japanese environmental groups into three categories: (*a*) those demanding compensation for injury from pollution; (*b*) those opposing development schemes; and (*c*) those suggesting alternative ways of living. . . .
>
> The anti-development groups nowadays constitute the core of the Japanese Environmental movement, largely because controversial development schemes such as power stations, sewage treatment works, highways, and airports are so widespread. The motivating force driving these groups is their life experience based on peace and quiet and beauty; when this is threatened, it is cherished. Though small, the groups are highly active—despite the fact that they are usually neither well funded nor well organized.

Distrust of modern technology and respect for the ecology of nature characterize the groups which seek an alternative way of life. The five thousand members of the Democratic Women's Union endeavor to safeguard health from pollution, bringing suit against polluters, "but is more active on a progressive front selling through national outlets products made from natural materials and processes." There is a recycling movement and one devoted to support and use of "organic goods" which contain no chemical additives. "About twenty farmers in the Kyoto area produce the vegetables, eggs, and fruit" distributed by this group, begun by a university professor in 1973, and smaller such groups are now forming in Osaka, Kobe, Tokyo, and Yokohama, to serve the urban population." These efforts are admittedly small and have no effect on the mass Japanese consumer, but every such reform begins with a tiny minority.

Tashio Hase concludes by saying that while, in recent years, Japan has become the world leader in terms of production and population per unit of habitable land, the country also leads in "the amount and quality of pollution per capita." How much worse must it get, he wonders, before the rate of "progress" can be slowed? "The alternative society proponents have the greatest opportunity to change the high energy-high mass consumption lifestyles of modern Japan and thereby fundamentally solve the national dilemma."