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THE DARK SIDE OF HUMAN NATURE

THE lead article of last week's MANAS, an endeavor to assess the various impacts of the changes the modern world has gone through during the past several hundred years, provided a number of useful quotations, the most valuable of which is probably a brief passage from the *Harper's* article by Walker Percy, in which, after speaking of our effort to "think scientifically," he asks this question:

> But what happens when one feels in the deepest sense possible that something has gone wrong with one's very self? When one experiences the common complaint of the age: the loss of meaning, the purposelessness, the loss of identity, of values? What happens when a person comes to believe that his very self is also the appropriate domain of "them," that is, the appropriate experts of the self?

Percy is too intelligent a man to attempt to answer this question, yet its formulation is certainly a contribution since it presents the central problem of the time in the only form that it can be directly attacked. But we need, we soon find, the help of some reflections of the self in, the world around us. The self, for us, is simply bare subjectivity, and how can we "think" about that? Yet there is a revelation of the self in our surroundings. Our world is largely made by selves, and what we have made of the world is then, in a sense, a portrait of ourselves, as stamped on the sensitive materials with which we live. Emerson put it well in his Lecture on War, saying:

> Observe how every truth and every error, each a *thought* of some man's mind, clothes itself with societies, houses, cities, language, ceremonies, newspapers. Observe the ideas of the present day—orthodoxy, skepticism, missions, popular education, temperance, anti-masonry, masonry, antislavery; see how each of these abstractions has embodied itself in an imposing apparatus in the community; and how timber, brick, lime and stone have flown into convenient shape, obedient to the master idea reigning in the minds of many persons. . . .
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> We surround ourselves always, according to our freedom and our ability, with true images of ourselves in things, whether it be ships or books or cannon or churches. The standing army, the arsenal, the camp and the gibbet do not appertain to man. They only serve as an index to show where man is now; what a bad, ungoverned temper he has; what an ugly neighbor he is; how long his hope lies. . . . War and peace thus resolve themselves into a mercury of the state of cultivation.

The study of ourselves, then, might well begin, today, with a sort of inventory of the environment we have created for ourselves—and, we must add, for our friends and neighbors. A volume has recently come to hand from England, *The Social and Environmental Effects of Large Dams,* Vol. 2, devoted to case studies of thirty-one large dams of recent or proposed construction in various parts of the world. The writers have each devoted close attention to one or two closely related dam projects. The volume was edited by Edward Goldsmith and Nicholas Hildyard, the editors of the *Ecologist.* The publisher is the Wadebridge Ecological Center, Worthyvale Manor, Camelford, Cornwall PL32 9TT, U.K. from whom the book may be ordered. The price is £20.

Something of the content of this book is indicated by the opening paragraphs of the introduction by Philip Williams, a hydrologist and consultant in San Francisco, who has opposed the construction of large and destructive dam projects in the U.S. and elsewhere. He says:

> The pace of worldwide dam construction has accelerated in the last two decades, transforming the earth's landscape and affecting millions of lives. Egypt's Aswan Dam has completely altered the hydrology of the Nile river, changing the agriculture and economy of an entire nation. The Mahaweli Project, now underway in Sri Lanka, is attempting to industrialize that country's society within a single generation. Ever larger, more grandiose projects are contemplated: China is planning the world's largest hydroelectric dam on the Yangtze; the Soviet Union is designing the world's largest water diversion scheme; Brazil intends to build 15 large dams in the

Amazon basin. Decisions made on dam projects in the next decade will affect most of the world's last remaining free-flowing rivers.

Dam projects are often seen as the key to a country's economic salvation through supplying hydroelectric power or permitting industrialized cash-crop agriculture. Even more significantly, they are viewed as symbols of modernity or progress. For example, large dams were referred to by Jawaharlal Nehru as the "temples of modern India."

Yet the technology which inspires so much faith and requires such a great sacrifice of resources is a new one and its impacts are still largely unknown. The vast majority of all large dams have been completed in the last twenty years. The operating life of all large dams combined is less than the combined operating life of a comparably new and expensive technology—nuclear power plants.

Large dams have an enormous impact on the environment, both directly by flooding valleys upstream, and indirectly, by altering the productive riparian, estuarine and coastal ecosystems hundreds of miles downstream. Dams also have the power to transform the social life of a country, destroying indigenous, traditional cultures and accelerating the change to a cash economy centered on cities. This very power to engineer human lives makes large dams attractive to governments and development agencies alike. The promise of radically changing a country's economy is frequently used to justify the destruction of communities, of ecosystems and of traditional agricultural systems. . . . The common messages in these 31 papers are striking and undermine the basic rationale for building large dams.

One of the oldest dams covered by this study, the Sennar Dam in Sudan to retain the waters of the Blue Nile for a large cotton-growing program in the Gezira area, was built in 1924. "The areas were clear-felled, no seedbearers were left, no fences erected, and regeneration was prevented by grazing. It was not until 1929 that a program of reforestation—where it did not impede cotton growing—was initiated." The first bad effect noted was the spread of schistosomiasis—an ill difficult to control. Other diseases linked to irrigation followed. The lives of the Sudanese were regimented to make them grow the cotton the Lancashire mills wanted. This paper is a long and complex story of failure which concludes:

> The Gezira scheme has been in operation for over 50 years. During this time the promised material prosperity for the tenants has not taken place. The technological and administrative system imposed on the tenants has radically increased the incidence of waterborne diseases, in the case of schistosomiasis, to an unbearable level. It has also resulted in considerable cultural strain. Women now live a much more restricted life within the confines of the village: They can no longer indulge in their former occupation of spinning and weaving and it is difficult for them to work in the fields with their menfolk, while their children have emigrated to the big cities in search of work. The men who still work in the tenancies show little enthusiasm for their daily work and, if they have the money, will hire cheap seasonal labor to do as much work possible for them. The plight of the seasonal workers is worse still. The traditional mode of life, together with the cultural and social structure of society, has largely broken down. It may be that this is but a small price to pay for the benefits to be derived from "development." However, in spite of the fact that Gezira was receiving 77 per cent of all government spending, until the late 1950s, "development" has yet to be realized by the Gezira people. In fact their quality of life has seriously declined. The Colonialists have left, but their policies are still applied—if anything with greater assiduity—in a social and physical environment to which they are totally unsuited.

This paper about the Sudan is by Nigel Pollard, who works on the control of pests on cotton crops in Israel.

There is almost a monotony in these papers, all of which reveal the same disregard of the welfare and wishes of the people who live in the area affected by the dam-building and the ruthless methods that in many cases have been used by governments against them. There seem to be no exceptions at all—no report among the thirty-one could be called "favorable," and the worst thing about big dams is that their effects are virtually irreversible. The editors say in their introduction:

> Building dams is a prodigiously expensive business. The world's largest hydroelectric complex—the Itaipu Dam on the Parana River between Paraguay and Brazil—cost $16 billion. Sri

Lanka's giant Mahaweli scheme (originally estimated to cost $1000 million) is now likely to cost $2,800 million. In China, the Three Gorges Scheme, which will uproot over two million people, will cost between $10 billion and $20 billion.

Few Third World governments are able to lay their hands on such vast sums of money. They must therefore borrow. But the loans that are made to them are made on the assumption that the dams will provide a net return on investment. In all too many cases, however, the dams have turned out to be economic white elephants. The Itaipu Dam has not brought the economic development which its backers were promised. The Sri Lankan Government is now having difficulties in meeting the interest payments on the loans it raised to pay for the Mahaweli scheme. In India, according to a recent report, every single large dam built since the Second World War has proved an economic disaster: not only have the dams cost more than estimated but they have failed to provide their expected benefits. The Republic of Guatemala is already in trouble paying for the Chixory Dam which was originally expected to cost $341 million but which ended up costing $90 million more than the government estimated—a sum which will have to be borrowed by a regime which is already in dire economic straits. . . . At present, the Third World owes some $700 billion to the West—a debt that threatens to destabilize the world economy. It is difficult to say how much of that debt has been incurred through dam projects, but we can safely assume that the proportion is considerable. It now seems clear that the $700 billion will never be repaid—and we doubt whether the interest on the loans will be paid much longer. The Peruvian Government has already defaulted, declaring that it will pay no more than five per cent of its export earnings in interest.

Why do countries like the United States go on building big dams, when such facts as these are becoming known? Because, it is explained, of the engineering mentality, which has no or little interest in environmental values and cultural effects. Engineers like big projects in which to demonstrate their prowess as builders, and the banks like big projects because that is what they are used to and think they know how to handle. Yet recognition of their mistakes, while slow in coming, is at least beginning. In his paper, "The Indian Experience with Large Dams," Bharat Dogra says:

Significantly, Robert McNamara, the former president of the World Bank, has himself acknowledged the failure of many irrigation projects to address the need of local farmers: "There are far too many cases in which it has taken ten years or more after the dam was completed for the water to actually reach the farmers. Major irrigation schemes often pre-empt necessary resources for on-farm improvement. The drama of harnessing a major river may be more exciting than the prosaic task of getting a steady trickle of water to a parched hectare, but to millions of smallholders that is what is going to make the difference between success and failure."

Dogra ends his paper by saying:

Commenting on Sri Lanka's giant Mahaweli scheme, Rene Dumont laments the tunnel vision that the "Big is Best" mentality engenders: "The World Bank is financing the harnessing of the biggest river on the island. This project is very costly, especially in terms of foreign exchange, and it will be a long time before it brings any benefit to the country (although it will rapidly benefit the foreign construction firms building it). Yet in the Kandy district alone, I saw possibilities for at least a thousand small earth dams which would be immediately productive, with next to no outlay in foreign exchange and with much use of local labor. But the Bank, to date, has refused to finance such small irrigation projects."

Sadly, the feasibility studies which are undertaken to assess the viability of large dams tend to be tailored to suit the requirements of the vested interests involved. The costs of the project are generally grossly underestimated, whilst the benefits are grossly over-rated. Yet, it is on the basis of such "expert opinion" that more and more of these vast white elephants are being built. Sooner or later, however the social, environmental and economic costs will have to be paid—and paid in full. When that moment comes, the Indian Government—and other governments similarly committed to large dams—will soon wish that they had heeded the lessons of the past. When will the authorities open their eyes to the social and ecological realities of water "development" projects?

These questions—and many others raised throughout this volume, which has a large section on the dams in the United States, reach a similar verdict—are all part of the shadow of our identity; we, the people who have the banks and the money, and who have trained the engineers. We cannot

plead "not guilty" because we didn't know, had no idea, have been busy with other things. In some sense, what is happening to the world, especially the Third World, but our own world too, is a reflection of our lives, of our decisions, and gives evidence of our regard or lack of regard for others. Until we begin to take charge in some significant way of the things done in our name, as part of our way of life, our economy, our social thinking, we shall have somehow to answer for this neglect.

The same may be said of a series of eight reports in the April, 1986, *Environment* on "Hazardous Wastes" which have been accumulating in the United States over the years and have now reached appalling dimensions. Why, one wonders, does our society produce such a variety of waste in chemicals threatening to health? Is there a way to live which would put an end to this monstrous accumulation? In any event, the first step in finding answers to such questions would be to inform ourselves of the problem. It is no longer a problem that can be left to either the government or specialists. As one of the editors of *Environment*, Jane Scully, puts it in an editorial: "Clearly, the issue has moved beyond the environmentalists' agenda and into that of society as a whole." In one of the articles, "Health Aspects of Hazardous Waste Disposal," prepared by a scientific panel, there is this statement:

> Public concern about the potential adverse effects of chemicals on the environment and on human health is widespread. The public has become highly suspicious of the chemical industry and has little confidence in government efforts to protect it from unknown and unseen chemical threats. The chemical industry, faced with mounting costs of research, development, and regulation, is concerned that its economic base is being eroded. Scientists are unable to provide enough information that is clear, concise, and unequivocal. Concerned citizens, aware of the potential for environmental and human health hazards, are angered by the unresponsiveness of the system. Government is criticized on all sides for actions and reactions and challenged in court at every move. Thus, it is not surprising that public concerns range from serious and well-founded to hysterical when faced with the possible health effects caused by chemical disposal sites.

For a full and just picture of what we are, these articles in *Environment* should be read.

There is, finally, an aspect of ourselves that we endeavor to disclaim, yet clings to us in its dark consequences. It may be objectified for examination by Raskolnikov's tortured musings in *Crime and Punishment:*

> Did I murder the old woman? I murdered myself once for all, for ever . . . But it was the devil that killed that old woman, not I.

This is the obsessive side of man's nature which betrays people into doing things that shame them, even horrify them . . . yet they do them. The questions raised by Carlos Fuentes in his *Salmagundi* (winter, 1985-86) essay will illustrate:

> How could the Holocaust of the Innocent be unleashed by the armed children of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms? How could the marvelous dream of socialist liberation end in the Stalinist Gulag? How could the democracy of Thomas Jefferson exterminate whole Vietnamese villages and its own fighting men with Agent Orange and napalm?

How and why do these things come about? How shall we explain the mystery of our divided minds? A recent book, *Star Wars*, by Robert M. Bowman, a retired Air Force Lt. Colonel, who was involved in the early stages of Star Wars research (published in paperback by Tarcher, $7.95), has been called "A dynamite exposé of Star Wars by its most informed and authoritative critic." No one can inspect this book, much less read it, without being utterly confused and amazed by this unbelievable fantasy of a program that cannot possibly work and would almost certainly bankrupt the nation should a serious attempt be made to carry it out. Yet we must still ask, in what sense are the people of the country *responsible* for the condition which allows such proposals to be made and vast sums to be spent in what is claimed to be their investigation?

This is the dark side of human nature which is revealed by following the suggestions for reflection by Walker Percy. Happily, there are other sides which bring to light other possibilities.

REVIEW
THE HEART OF PHILOSOPHY

IN the Preface to *The Heart of Philosophy* (Harper & Row paperback, $8.95), a book first brought out in hard cover by Knopf in 1982, and reviewed in MANAS for April 6, 1983, the author, Jacob Needleman, gives the book's content:

> Briefly stated, then, the aim of this book is to show the place that great philosophical ideas can occupy in the everyday life of contemporary men and women. It is my view that the weakening of authentic philosophy in our century has resulted in a form of collective and individual pathology that has far deadlier consequences than is generally imagined. We live in a time of metaphysical repression and this repression must be lifted. The various forms of psychological and sexual repression that modern psychiatry has unsuccessfully fought against are as nothing when compared to the stifling of the love of meaning, which phrase actually is the definition of philosophy. The love of meaning, the search for meaning, is the only real, objective force for good in the life of modern man. Everything else we hope for and wish for ourselves and our children depends upon it.

In the introduction he says:

> There is a yearning in the human heart that is nourished only by real philosophy and without this nourishment man dies as surely as if he were deprived of food or air. But this part of the human psyche is not known or honored in our culture. When it does break through to our awareness, it is either ignored or treated as though it were something else. It is given wrong names, it is not cared for; it is crushed. And eventually, it may withdraw altogether, never again to appear. When this happens, man becomes a thing. No matter what he accomplishes or experiences, no matter what happiness he knows or what service he performs, he has in fact lost his real possibility. He is dead.

Present-day humans, Dr. Needleman believes, are beginning to sense this deadness in themselves and many are trying to do something about it. The idea is to recover a sense of the reality of the inner life, the philosophic life. He regards this as an act of remembering. "The function of philosophy in human life is to help man remember. It has no other task. And anything that calls itself philosophy which does not serve this function is simply not philosophy."

How does he go about trying to stir this function in his readers? He goes back to Socrates, whom he regards as the master of the art of self-questioning. Philosophy, he points out, is not and does not pretend to be a statement of "the truth." It is the search for and the love of truth, as Pythagoras defined it. For all its achievements, our civilization has neglected this search.

> In human civilization, and in the individual life of every human being, behind every problem to be solved, there is a question of philosophy to be asked—and not only to be asked as we usually ask, but to be pondered and lived with as a reminder of something we have forgotten, something essential. Our culture has generally tended to solve its problems without experiencing its questions. That is our genius as a civilization, but it is also our pathology. Now the pathology is overtaking the genius, and people are beginning to sense this everywhere.

Needleman devotes several pages to his attempt to convey to the reader the meaning behind the figure of Socrates in Athenian history and in our own, which is much the same.

> First, let us realize that as the center of culture of the ancient world, fifth-century Athens contained, in essence, every sort of artistic, intellectual, and pragmatic current that we know of in our own culture. We have modern science ancient Greece had the equivalent in the natural philosophers of the time—the equivalent of our physicists, mathematicians, biologists. We have the religions of Christianity and Judaism; ancient Greece had its religions as well, its gods, its orientation toward salvation, the other world, its sacred rituals, its symbols, its spirituality. In short, Socrates knew about religion—quite as much as you or I or anyone in our world knows about religion. It counts as nothing to say that Socrates did not know about Christ and therefore was not exposed to the same depth of religious truth as modern man. It counts as nothing to say this, because of the quite obvious fact that very few, if any, human beings today can be said to know about Christ. In every culture at all times, there exists religion; and let us grant that Socrates understood, at the very least, the depths of the religious impulse.

Socrates also understood science in the sense of recognizing its limitations. What, then, was Socrates?

> He questioned and interrogated—yes, this we can assume about him. Yet Socrates and the activity of Socrates, his questioning, is an unknown factor. This unknown factor, the force we cannot label or explain in terms familiar to us, exerted and continues to exert a current of influence throughout the world that has rarely been equalled and perhaps never surpassed in recorded history. What was Socrates? The point is: What was the Socratic questioning? If virtue was the aim of Socrates, why was it pursued through questioning rather than through the sort of exposition of doctrine, analysis of concepts, synthesis of great ideas, formation of symbols, monuments, works of music and art, legislation of political systems, or any of the countless modes and methods through which great minds have transmitted ideas over the centuries? . . . .
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> The Socratic power is to penetrate, again and again, behind the world of appearances; the world of emotional appearances as well as the world of perceptual appearances—that is, the world as I like it or dislike it, the world to which I am attached in my emotions, the world of my emotions. To penetrate beyond the world of appearances means to destroy my beliefs, my opinions, my certainties not only about objects, but about myself. What opens out beyond these appearances? Nothing—except a new quality of mind that stands for the moment in actual relationship to the unconscious parts of human nature. Beyond the appearance, lies the Question. To Socrates, the channel of virtue, the power of real philosophy lies somehow in this special power of self-interrogation.

What was the Socratic goal? It was to enable those he talked to to begin to examine themselves and their lives in the light of their conscience. When this was accomplished, his work was done.

The excellence of this book lies in the fact that the author does not pretend to be able to inform anyone. His intention is to provoke to self-search. If that does not happen, then nothing worth mentioning has happened. He is good at this because he is pursuing the same quest himself. His advantage, if he has an advantage, is a thoroughgoing knowledge of what is accounted "philosophy" in Western thought. He is quite able to deal with such distractions from his central purpose, which is to direct his readers or hearers back to reading Plato—from whom he quotes long passages.

What else is the book about? It seems mainly to be about the ways in which he has been attempting to do this during the past several years. For example, he worked with a class of fifteen teenagers in a San Francisco high school for a year or two. He tells about this in detail—how he got to know the students individually and how they responded to his course in "philosophy." Then he felt the need to know their parents, so he met some of them and they invited him to give them a course in philosophy, too.

In one place he speaks of one of the teenagers, Sim, to whom he had grown close.

> Sim will discover, or feel, that the God of Socrates is self-knowledge, self-inquiry. It is at this point that guidance is needed. If I can succeed in communicating to him even a small fraction of the richness of content in the Socratic commandment to "know thyself," I will consider that I have done something of service for him. I wish to spare him the years in which that phrase was exiled into a corner of my own mind far away from real connection with the rest of my life and aspirations.
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> The Athenian court would have gladly exiled Socrates to a far country, but he would not accept that. Are we not like the Athenian court ourselves? To us, the phrase "self-knowledge" means little more than "psychologizing" about ourselves; that is, obtaining emotionally stimulating opinions about ourselves, against the background of the view of human nature insinuated into us by our own abnormal social order.
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> Or it means conceptual analysis, which cannot penetrate into our emotions and body because the faculty of thinking itself is encapsulated within us. Thoughts about myself have no penetrating action upon the emotions and instincts.
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> Socratic self-knowledge is self-attention, which is a force that can exist and act with tremendous power within ourselves. For Socrates, it develops and grows in relationship to the various functions of the whole human structure, in the midst of the "citizens of Athens," in "the marketplace."

For those who are interested, there is plenty about Hume, Kant, Wittgenstein, and other thinkers in this book. But the best is on Plato and Socrates.

COMMENTARY
THE WISDOM OF SCHUMACHER

WE are continually reminded of the validity of E. F. Schumacher's title *Small Is Beautiful.* Doing things on a large scale doubtless has its place, but it is a much smaller place than we commonly suppose. Take for example what Rene Dumont is quoted as saying (on page 2) about the tunnel vision of "Big is Best." He is speaking of the immense dam project now being carried on by Sri Lanka. In the quotation from him given by Bharat Dogra, Dumont says:

> "The World Bank is financing the harnessing of the biggest river on the island. This project is very costly, especially in terms of foreign exchange, and it will be a long time before it brings any benefit to the country (although it will rapidly benefit the foreign construction firms building it). Yet in the Kandy district alone, I saw possibilities for at least a thousand small earth dams which would be immediately productive with next to no outlay in foreign exchange and with much use of local labor. But the Bank, to date has refused to finance such small irrigation projects."

Then, also in this issue, on page seven, is the comment of a present-day farmer, "It's a damn good thing I don't have a bigger farm." He was recognizing the advantages realized by the Amish farmers who keep their farms small enough to do what needs to be done for the good of the farm.

In *Resurgence* for May-June, 1975, Schumacher advocated undertakings "on a *human* scale, so that the need for rules and regulations is minimized and all difficult cases can be resolved, as it were, on the spot, face to face, without creating precedents—for where there is no rule, there cannot be a precedent." He goes on:

> The problem of administration is thus reduced to a problem of size. Small units are self-administrating in the sense that they do not require full-time administrators of exceptional ability; almost anybody can see to it that things are kept in reasonable order and everything that needs to be done is done by the right person at the right time.

Being human, we are all of us fools on at least a few occasions. If we keep our projects small there is the likelihood that bad mistakes will not prove overwhelming. But if everything that we attempt is too big, there may be no remedies at all.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

NO. 50 of *Growing Without Schooling* has a progress report which begins:

> This marks fifty issues of steady publication, fifty issues of your letters and networking, fifty issues of testimony to children's ability to learn, and the last eight years of John Holt's life and work. A lot has happened since John printed *GWS* No. 1 in 1977. We've seen homeschooling go from being a semi-clandestine activity to an increasingly accepted alternative to school. Homeschooling is now talked about more openly in education and legislative circles, though still in cautious terms. In this issue our colleague Sandy Kendall interviews the Curriculum Director for Barnstable, Mass., one of our oldest "Friendly School District" listings. There is a note of cooperation in this public school district that is refreshing and innovative; other school districts would be wise to follow its lead.
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> The U.S. Department of Education is taking an interesting point of view concerning teacher certification. We have read about several states that allow people to teach full-time in classrooms before they have earned a teaching certificate. In a recent *Boston Globe* article (2/18/86) Education Secretary Bennett offers his thoughts on opening the teaching ranks:
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> "Provisional certification should be given to people from other career fields who want to become teachers," Bennett said in an address to the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce. "Candidates," he said, "should be competent in a subject area, have decent character and be interested in communicating with the young. . . . I say open up the profession to anybody who fits these three criteria. . . ." He suggested candidates could undergo "spot evaluations" in the classroom to determine whether they should receive permanent certification.
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> Homeschooling parents should not have much trouble meeting Mr. Bennett's criteria and they should note Mr. Bennett's words when their abilities as "qualified teachers" come under fire.

Sandy Kendall, on the staff of *Growing Without Schooling,* tells about her talk with Jane Sheckells, Curriculum Director for the elementary level of the school system in Barnstable, Mass. Sandy says in introduction: "Knowing Barnstable had accepted and cooperated with home schooling families for several years, I wanted to know how the school had reacted to the first request, and what had been generally their philosophy and method of dealing with home schoolers."

> SANDY KENDALL: A lot of people who haven t started homeschooling but are thinking of it, feel very intimidated about going to their school board or administration. They just don't know how to begin or how they'll be received. Had yon ever thought of homeschooling before it was actually proposed to you?
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> JANE SHECKELLS: No, we hadn't. It presented itself when the Mahoneys came. Then we began to think about it. Really, we have been open as a school system to working with parents. As long as I've been here—nine years—right from the superintendent through the school committee, we've tried to have parents involved in committees, in planning, in setting goals for the system, so we've been open to that kind of thing. Even though we feel it's our responsibility to provide the educational format, it's a partnership.
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> SK: So you weren't shocked?
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> JS: No. We've always had private schools, kids have gone to private schools, whether it's been a parochial school or one of the other private schools here on the Cape. That's an option parents have. This is just another option that they were taking advantage of. So I don't think we were resistant to talk about it.
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> SK: And what sort of requirements do you have for homeschoolers?
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> JS: Basically we do the same thing with any parent interested in homeschooling. We worked it through with the Mahoneys and it seemed to work well, so that's been our model. The parents or parent come and really talk with us about why they want to do this. We have to feel that it's going to be a good learning situation for the kids. The state requires that we monitor what happens in education. That's our job. Our assistant superintendent back then used to say, "Our job in these kinds of situations is to walk in the shoes of the child." Once we can feel the kind of situation they're describing, the philosophy, then we get beyond the philosophy of *why* they want to do it to *what* they plan to do. If we feel that the child will certainly do as well as he or she would in a public school setting, then we don't think we have the right to say they can't. If a person presented an argument

that we felt was a very narrow, negative kind of reason for doing it, and we felt it wasn't going to be a healthy, growing experience for the child, then I think we'd have some problems.

SK: Have you ever turned down any request?

JS: No, we really haven't.

Donna Richoux, editor of *Growing Without Schooling,* reviews John McPhee's latest book, *Rising from the Plains,* about the geology of the Rocky Mountains. In it he tells about David Love, the 70-year-old geologist who made discoveries about the geology of Wyoming, his home state. Love, McPhee relates, was educated mainly by his mother at home. His boyhood in the ranch led to his lifelong love of geology. Here is a section of the book about his homeschooling:

. . . From time to time, other school marms were provided by the district. They came for three months in the summer. One came for the better part of a year. By and large, though, the boys were taught by their mother. . . . She had the 1911 *Encyclopedia Britannica,* the Redpath Library, a hundred volumes of Greek and Roman literature, Shakespeare, Dickens, Emerson, Thoreau, Longfellow, Kipling, Twain. She taught her sons French, Latin, and a bit of Greek. She read to them from books in German, translating as she went along. They read the Iliad and the Odyssey. The room was at the west end of the ranch house and was brightly illuminated by the setting sun. When David as a child saw the sunbeams leaping off the books, he thought the contents were escaping.

In some ways, there was more chaos in this remote academic setting than there could ever be in a grade school in the heart of a city.

The following is from the mother's journal:

The house might be full of men, waiting out a storm, or riding on a round-up. I was baking, canning, washing clothes, making soap. Allan and David stood by the gasoline washing machine reading history or geography while I put sheets through the wringer. I ironed. They did spelling beside the ironing board, or while I kneaded bread; they gave the tables up to 15 times 15 to the treadle of the sewing machine. Mental problems, printed in figures on large cards they solved while they raced across the room to write the answers . . . and learned to think on their feet. Nine written problems done correctly, without help, meant no tenth problem. . . . It was surprising in how little time they finished their work—to watch the butchering, to help drive the bawling calves into the weaning pen, or to get to the corral, when they heard the hoofbeats of running horses and the cries of cowboys crossing the creek.

McPhee goes on:

No amount of intellectual curiosity or academic discipline was ever going to hold a boy's attention if someone came in saying the milk cow was mired in a bog hole or that old George was out by the wildhorse corral with the biggest coyote ever killed in the region, or if the door opened and, as David recalls an all too typical event, "they were carrying in a cowboy with guts ripped out by a saddle horn." The lessons stopped, the treadle stopped, and she sewed up the cowboy. . . .

One fall, their mother went to Riverton, 65 miles away to await the birth of Phoebe. For her sons, 11 and 12, she left behind a carefully prepared program of study. In the weeks that followed, they were in effect enrolled in a correspondence school run by their mother. They did their French, their spelling, their arithmetic lessons, put them in envelopes, rode 15 miles to the post office and mailed them to her. She graded the lessons and sent them back—before and after the birth of the baby. . . .

This material was so interesting that we used it. But mostly, *Growing Without Schooling* is made up of letters from parents who tell about their adventures teaching their children today. The paper comes out every other month and has 32 pages. A year's subscription is $20. Write for the paper to 729 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

FRONTIERS

How The Amish Do It

THE *Whole Earth Review* for the Spring of 1986 has an article, "A Lesson for the Modern World," by Gene Logsdon, an Ohio farmer, which would make good reading for everybody, farmer or not, although it is really addressed to American farmers, many of whom are in serious economic difficulties. For introduction, having recognized Logsdon's name as a contributor to the Jackson-Berry-Colman book, *Meeting the Expectations of the Land*, we read again his essay on "The Importance of Traditional Farming Practices for a Sustainable Modern Agriculture," which helps to show why he at once realized the value of the Amish contribution to intelligent farming.

In the *Whole Earth Review* he starts out:

> Amish farmers are still making money in these hard times despite (or rather because of) their supposedly outmoded, horse-farming ways. If one of them does get into financial jeopardy, it is most often from listening to the promises of modern agri-business instead of traditional wisdom. His brethren will usually bail him out. More revealing, the Amish continue to farm profitably not only with an innocent disregard for get-big-or-get-out modern technology, but without participation in direct government subsidies other than those built into market prices, which they can't avoid.
>
> I first learned about the startlingly effective economy of Amish life when I was invited to a barn raising near Wooster, Ohio. A tornado had leveled four barns and acres of prime Amish timber. In just three weeks the downed trees were sawn into girders, posts, and beams and the four barns rebuilt and filled with livestock donated by neighbors to replace those killed by the storm. Three weeks. Nor were the barns the usual modern, one-story metal boxes hung on poles. They were huge buildings, three and four stories high, post-and-beam framed, and held together with handhewn mortises and tenons. I watched the raising of the last barn in open-mouthed awe. Some 400 Amish men and boys, acting and reacting like a hive of bees in absolute harmony of cooperation, started at sunrise with only a foundation and floor and by noon, *by noon*, had the huge edifice far enough along that you could put hay in it.

How do the Amish live? The Amish homes in Holmes County, Logsdon says, are quite like our own except for the absence of electricity.

> These latter houses sport gas appliances, modern bathrooms, Maytag wringer washers with Honda gasoline motors (the Amish housewives say Hondas start easier than Briggs & Stratton). Though I saw none in the homes I visited some Old Order Amish are allowed to use battery-operated kitchen mixers and the like—even battery-operated typewriters! Though there is something of a lack of interior decoration as we would call it (unless you go in for the country-look craze), any middle-class American could move into one of these Holmes County homes and not feel materially deprived until habit called for television, radio, or record player.
>
> There are no telephones in the homes, but the Amish use the telephone booths that dot the roadsides. An Amishman views a telephone wire into the home, like an electric line, as an umbilical cord tying it to dangerous worldly influences. You will not talk so long or so often at a pay booth down the road. . . . Clothing is a low budget item for the Amish as they use long-wearing fabrics and often sew the clothes themselves. Styles do not change.
>
> Another surprising element in the Amish economy is the busy social life they lead within a day's ride by buggy or bicycle. We could scarcely schedule a softball game because there was always a wedding, a sale, a quilting, or church and school doings to attend! I can assure the world that the Amish have just as much fun as anyone, at far less than the cost of weekends made for Michelob.

Toward the end of his article, Logsdon gets to the heart of the matter as most people look at it:

> I asked one of the Amish farmers to compare his costs for producing a corn crop of 150 bushels per acre (his excellent yield in '84 and '85) with the 1984 Ohio State budget estimates as published each year by the state extension service. He returned the budget to me by mail with his figures. The first column of figures represents Ohio State's estimated typical cash grain farmer's cost per acre; the second, the Amish farmer's.

Item	1	2
Variable costs:		
Seed	$ 24.00	$ 28.66
Chemical fertilizer	63.00	9.10
Lime	8.00	5.06
Pesticides/herbicides	28.00	2.50
Fuel, grease, oil	19.00	3.00
Corn drying, fuel, electric	23.00	0.00
Trucking, fuel only	3.00	0.00
Repairs	13.00	.25
Misc. Supplies, utilities, soil tests, small tools, crop insurance, etc.	13.00	.50
Interest on operating capital	12.00	.00
Fixed costs		
Labor	9.00	.00
Machinery charge	50.00	5.00
Land rental charge	110.00	0.00
Management charge	18.00	0.00
TOTAL	$393.00	$44.07

Questions may arise, but these are probably covered by the footnotes Logsdon adds to the comparison. He goes on:

> According to Ohio State experts, with the price of corn reckoned at $2.40 a bushel (lower now) a non-Amish farmer would gross $360 per acre against $393 in operating expenses for a net loss of $33 per acre, leading one farmer to comment, "It's a damn good thing I don't have a bigger farm." Meanwhile the Amish would realize a net profit of about $315 per acre.

Logsdon names one or two American farmers who have learned to farm as the Amish do, though they have not become Amish. One of these remarks about the farm problems of his contemporaries: "What in the world are they thinking?" The Amish have their own answer. "Don't spend more than you make and life will be good to you." And Logsdon adds: "Uncle Deficit should be so wise."

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11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

Diane Lawson, Mgr.