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THE STORY OF MANKIND

IT is entirely logical that we should at last be receiving warnings from leaders of the business community to the effect that the insane fiscal policies of the national government will, unless altered, lead the country into an economic abyss from which recovery, if possible, will be both painful and difficult. Other critics point to other tendencies which they regard as more fundamentally in error, but economic disaster is the primary concern of businessmen. For example, the chairman of the Prudential Insurance Company, one of the largest in this field, along with the notice of a premium due, sent out a notice which said:

> I'm worried about America's economic future. Unless something is done—and done soon—the federal government s huge budget deficits could drive up interest rates touch off a new round of inflation, choke off our economic recovery, and cause us to lose even more jobs and business to foreign competitors!

A few facts:

> For every dollar the federal government receives in taxes and revenues, it is spending $1.23! This year alone it is spending $220 billion more than it takes in—a new and dangerous record! Next year our national debt will reach $2 trillion ($2,000,000,000,000.00). That amounts to $34,000 for every family of four in America.
>
> Just paying the interest on our national debt will cost taxpayers $199 billion next year. That's more than we're spending on Medicaid, Medicare, student aid, transportation, education, job training, farm subsidies, and medical care for veterans *combined.*
>
> The budget deficit is the major cause of our trade gap, which soared to a record $123 billion last year. We've already lost *two million jobs* to foreign competitors—and we could lose two *more* by the end of this decade.

The chairman does not go on to point out that the country is on the way to becoming the largest debtor nation in the world by reason of what we spend on preparation for war; this would involve him in political considerations and controversy not to the taste of businessmen; but he is outspoken about a policy which spells economic doom for the country. We may perhaps be grateful for that.

Meanwhile, we are confronted by the fact that the United States, long famous for its extraordinary industry, inventiveness, and prosperity, is now on the verge of bankruptcy, if these figures mean anything at all. What, then, is wrong with government as we experience it? The answer to this question was given a hundred years ago by Herbert Spencer, in essays published in the *Contemporary Review* in 1884, and many times reprinted in book form. After long years of unpopularity, Spencer is now being listened to for his cogent analysis of the weaknesses of the modern nation state. Spencer, an anarchist reviewer said in *Freedom* in 1983, "attacked the Welfare State on the eve of its creation; in puncturing the new superstition of 'the divine right of parliaments,' he attacked the dictatorship of the majority." He appealed to liberals to resume their traditional opposition of institutionalized authority. "A century later only the details need to be changed; the general situation remains the same." There is, the *Freedom* critic says, "much to be learned from these essays today, despite the fact that Spencer uncritically accepts the property system and he unwittingly ignores the class system."

In what was Spencer right? He was right in pointing to the follies which result from the coercive power of government. The Whigs, he maintained, and later the Liberals, accomplished much good by relieving the people of the injustices and compulsions of Tory rule. He lists these achievements in English history in some detail, then calls upon the Liberals of his time to go back to their original policy.

> They (the Liberals) do not remember that, in one way or another, all these truly liberal changes diminished compulsory cooperation throughout social life and increased voluntary cooperation. They have forgotten that, in one direction or another, they diminished the range of governmental authority, and increased the area within which each citizen may act unchecked. They have lost sight of the truth that in past times Liberalism habitually stood for individual freedom *versus* State-coercion.

How could they lose sight of this truth? Spencer answers by saying that while what they did was the elimination or mitigation of evils, "in the minds of most, a rectified evil is equivalent to an achieved good, these measures came to be thought of as so many positive benefits; and the welfare of the many came to be conceived alike by Liberal statesmen and Liberal voters as the aim of Liberalism." They would now legislate for the benefit of the people. But, Spencer says, they don't know enough to do this. They go on making law after law, taking over more and more responsibility, blaming everything but their own ignorance when the laws work only poorly or not at all. Spencer concludes:

> Just as the system of voluntary cooperation by companies, associations, unions, to achieve business and other ends, spreads throughout a community; so does the antagonistic system of compulsory cooperation under State-agencies spread; and the larger becomes its extension the more power of spreading it gets. The question of questions for politicians should ever be—"What type of social structure am I tending to produce?" But this is a question he never entertains.

In another essay he says:

> The enthusiastic philanthropist, urgent for some Act of Parliament to remedy this evil or secure the other good, thinks it a trivial and far-fetched objection that the people will be morally injured by doing things for them instead of leaving them to do things themselves. He vividly conceives the benefit he hopes to get achieved, which is a positive and readily-imagined thing. He does not conceive the diffused, invisible, and slowly-accumulating effect wrought on the popular mind, and so does not believe in it; or, if he admits it, thinks it beneath consideration.

Spencer ends this book by finding that the French Revolution was a consequence of an excess of government:

> Anyone who studies, in the writings of Taine and De Tocqueville, the state of things which preceded the French Revolution, will see that that tremendous catastrophe came about from so excessive a regulation of men's actions in all their details, and such an enormous drafting away of the products of their actions to maintain the regulating organization, that life was fast becoming impracticable. . . . And if we ask what then made, and what now makes, this error possible, we find it to be the political superstition that governmental power is subject to no restraints.
>
> When that "divinity" which "cloth hedge a king," and which has left a glamour around the body inheriting his power, has quite died away—when it begins to be seen clearly that, in a popularly governed nation, the government is simply a committee of management; it will also be seen that this committee of management has no intrinsic authority. . . . The function of Liberalism in the past was that of putting a limit to the powers of kings. The function of true Liberalism in the future will be that of putting a limit to the powers of Parliaments.

Interestingly, the *Freedom* reviewer remarks:

> By the time Spencer died in 1903, in his eighties, he felt that all his work had been a failure. Not only had the power of the State increased in every Western country despite his repeated warnings and with the support of every party, but the worst evils of the State, which are scarcely mentioned in these essays, but were frequently discussed elsewhere, were becoming disastrous—militarism and imperialism were beginning to dominate even the most "liberal" nations, and the Warfare State was taking over the Welfare State. If he could have lived another eighty years, he could only have felt that his lessons, if they have been universally ignored, have been universally proved true.

We go from Spencer and the English scene in the nineteenth century to a hundred years later in the United States, taking a look at urban renewal, which came to be regarded as one of the country's most urgent problems—the decaying cities. For this we draw on Charles Abrams' classic study, *The City Is the Frontier* (Harper Colophon, 1967). It was during the depression years of the

30s that the Federal Housing Administration came into being. In those days home-building was carried on mostly by small general contractors. To stimulate these builders the FHA undertook to insure mortgages up to go per cent of the cost of the land and building. Mr. Abrams says:

> After the initial public housing experiment, Congress in 1937 passed the United States Housing Act under which it provided loans and subsidies to help cities house their low-income families. By 1950, hardly a phase of home building and improvement remained unaided. The little builder gradually became a bigger-time operator who could swing a million-dollar deal with no more than a little front money. The federal government became the shaft and spoke of the building wheel, the brace of the mortgage business, the buttress of home ownership, and the prop under new rental housing. It also became the destroyer of the nation's slums, an activity which at first had been a social operation but in 1949 also became a tool of the private building enterprise.

There were various effects of this enormous project. Commenting, Abrams says:

> The main purpose of a city is to act for the health and welfare of its people—which is the governmental function. The city also has proprietary functions, involved with the properties it owns for governmental purposes (sidewalks, asphalt plants, piers, etc.). The proprietary activities may not be extended into the real estate business. . . . Although the city may profit as an incident of its authorized operations, private gain or speculation as a main aim are not within the contemplation of its charter. The traditional rule is that a city is organized not to make money but to spend it.
>
> Urban renewal offered the opportunity to cash in on some of the builders' profits, and the cities reached for the money. In the absence of adequate state and federal aid to help meet their soaring commitments, they sought whatever revenues they could lay hands on. The trouble is that when a city gets mixed up in its motives, it is apt to subordinate its social obligations to is financial prospects. This is what has happened in many renewal operations that have been called "successful." It became less important to clean up a slum than to clean up tax collections. There are instances when both the public good and the public treasury have been enhanced, and in these a gain can be chalked up against the deficits of urban renewal. But it is a sad commentary that cities should have to look for profitable ventures to pay the costs of governing. It highlights the desperate plight of cities and the need for an overhaul of the federal-state-city tax system looking toward a more equitable distribution of revenues and aid.

Another comment:

> As federal operations expanded in housing and building, the federal government soon became not only the insurer but also the direct financier, subsidizer, and joint venturer under a widening variety of mechanisms. They embraced trailer lot development, college dormitories, private nursing homes, and almost every other kind of rental housing project. . . .
>
> In practice, the mortgage lender not only has FHA insurance of its risk, but can have its money any time it asks for it. Thus, although mortgages are bought at yields geared to long-term interest rates, the instrument is actually short term. Under this arrangement, an interest rate not much higher than the government rate would seem to be warranted. But interest rates on such prime investments are little less than the going rate on uninsured mortgages.
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> In short, the government now not only makes it possible for builders to embark on risky ventures with little or no cash but it underwrites risks in the mortgage business and provides liquidity to the lending institutions when they no longer want the paper. The thin thread of equity (if any) provides the dubious margin that "justifies" the adventures. Social purpose, the rationale for most subsidized operations, has become the palliative for the removal of the gamble from private building speculations and mortgage investments and for passing it onto the government.
>
> Unless these mechanisms are reshaped to benefit low-income groups or fulfill similar social purposes, the emerging trend of the system would seem to be toward a "socialism for the rich and private enterprise for the poor."

At present, some twenty years after Abrams wrote, inflation and high interest rates have made it practically impossible for ordinary people with moderate incomes to own their own homes. The big banks are many of them in trouble by reason of the enormous loans they have made to third world countries which now, it seems apparent, can no longer be paid and before too long, as John McClaughry has pointed out, there will either be

"widespread and open defaults by the debtor nations" or "elaborately disguised efforts to mask de facto defaults with elaborate loan rescheduling." McClaughry expects "schemes for transferring the near worthless loans from the big banks to the taxpayers." Meanwhile, the deficit of the United States, which began to take on huge proportions with the Vietnam War, will soon be greater than the foreign debts of either Brazi1 or Mexico.

American farmers, the people whom Thomas Jefferson regarded as the moral as well as the practical backbone of the country, are in deep trouble. In his recent book, *The Future Is Not What It Used To Be* (Dodd, Mead, $19.85), Warren Johnson summarizes:

> The farm population in the United States fell from 30.5 million people in 1940 to 7.9 million in 1977, its lowest point, a drop of 74 per cent in thirty-seven years. This process left farming areas with a feeling of old age, abandonment, and decay that has been hard to overcome. . . . In 1960, 18 per cent of all farm families had incomes below $1,000! This was the era when the farm population was falling the fastest, and the very low incomes are a measure of the economic pressure being exerted on farm families to get out of farming and head for the cities. In the end, most farmers had no choice. . . .
>
> Farmers found themselves in a very common trap during this period when technological advance was so rapid. They could see how much work the new farm machines could do, but they also saw how expensive they were. The only way to utilize these machines profitably was to use them on large acreages, but few farmers could afford to buy not only the new machines but more land as well. Most farmers had two choices, two ways to go broke. They could go broke quickly buying the machines but not being able to use them on enough land to earn the money to make their payments. Or they could go broke slowly without buying the machines and trying to live on a declining income as the new machines brought down the cost of growing food—and the prices the farmers received for their crops. . . .
>
> If they had been able to see these changes coming, they could have sold out and headed for the cities earlier, avoiding the toil, the poverty, and the crushing of the spirit brought on by this inexorable process. And there was no reason why they couldn't have changed earlier, but it was a hard thing to do, to give up a familiar way of life for one in the cities that was unknown and, to most of them, unattractive.

Then Mr. Johnson asks:

> Could we write the same story for industrial America as the beginning of the steady erosion of a once prosperous way of life? The ominous trends are certainly there. Markets for many products are glutted, which means that prices are weak and some producers are being forced out of business. Foreign competition is becoming stiffer, especially from east Asian countries, and governments are responding to political pressure to preserve jobs by erecting trade barriers or subsidizing their own industries, both of which threaten the international trade on which most nations of the world now depend.

The logic of Mr. Warren's book is in behalf of adapting ourselves to the conditions which obviously lie ahead—material scarcity on all counts, the breakdown and disappearance of affluence, the impossibility of maintaining a large and unproductive bureaucracy to govern the rampant individualism to which we have become accustomed, and the need for revival of community and cooperation to take the place of the wasteful society of the present. "The greatest problem," Mr. Warren says, "is likely to be that too many individuals will refuse to give up their right to look at society opportunistically, or that community will not be strong enough to defend itself against these opportunists."

What, then, should people do? The answer lies, we think, in conceiving of a program or plan of life that does not anticipate a massive conversion of large numbers of people to a "reformed" way of life, but which affords the options of change to those who decide to alter the patterns of their existence—a plan, in short, for imperfect people. An example would be the Quakers who, ever since the seventeenth century, have striven to follow the ethic adopted by George Fox, their founder, that "there is that of God in every man," leading the Quakers to rely on an internal inspiration for change. The Quakers do not proselytize for members, but set an example in their own behavior. (An excellent

book, *The Quiet Rebels,* by Margaret Hope Bacon, which gives the history of this group, who now number 120,000 in the United States, has recently been published by New Society Publishers in Philadelphia.) More anciently, the spread of Buddhism throughout China and other Far Eastern countries illustrates the method by which moral growth becomes possible, whatever the major currents and habits of the time.

On the side of change in the present is the comparatively sudden realization that the world is economically and ecologically one. Our self-consciousness is now growing to include other nations and peoples, as well as all the living things of the earth, while the laws of the common life are slowly becoming evident. As we begin to see ourselves as part of this great brotherhood, a larger responsibility becomes ours, and with responsibility comes the vision capable of carrying it out. Such recognition, it may be, is the true story of mankind.

REVIEW
"PEACE IS POSSIBLE"

THERE are times when attempting a typical review of a book is about the last thing a writer or critic wants to do, quite apart from the question of whether he is qualified to do it. This applies to *Confronting War* by Ronald J. Glossop (McFarland & Co., Jefferson, N.C., 1983, $19.95), a book of close to 300 pages which lists and discusses all the major issues and opinions concerning warmaking and offers evaluations of most of them. For a good "conventional" review of this book, one would need a remarkably well-informed writer in a number of areas. But an unconventional review might better serve the readers—the kind of a review, say, that might be expected of Freeman Dyson, who knows all the conventional attitudes yet recognizes the need to go beyond them to say something worth saying. Ideally, the reviewer of this book should be someone familiar with all the facts and viewpoints about war and able to dispense with most of them briefly and go on to an actual solution. This is what E.F. Schumacher could do in economics, what Wendell Berry is doing in relation to the problems of agriculture—both writers who know how to expose the pointlessness of practically all the dominant opinions of the time on these subjects.

Is there anyone who has written about war in this way? We think only of Gandhi, and then, not remarkably, add what both Schumacher and Berry have said on the subject, since no one who writes with penetration on a topic of central concern can fail to give attention to war.

Well, what did Gandhi say about war? He said that it was the natural result of the acquisitive industrial society, which brings injustice and therefore war. He proposed the gradual establishment of another kind of society, based upon communities of service instead of appetite and self-indulgence, and on non-violence, the refusal to do harm to others. The familiar response to Gandhi's ideas has been to say that people won't change their motivations in this way, that violence may be the only means to protect themselves from the harm intended by others, and that nations with military forces are necessary for this.

Then, Gandhi replied, you will have war. But his book, *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Home Rule), published in 1909, gives his views, which never changed to the end of his life. One should not take Gandhi at second hand.

What does Ronald Glossop say about Gandhi's proposal? After a brief account of Gandhi's conception and application of "nonviolent resistance," he writes:

> It is claimed that nonviolent resistance can end war because it provides a means other than violence by which oppressed people can eliminate injustice. The case of India shows how it can be used by the people of a nation to rid themselves of domination by the government of another nation. The civil rights movement in the U.S., led by Martin Luther King, Jr., shows how it can be used within a nation as a substitute for violent revolution. But the big question for nonviolent resistance is whether it can succeed in eliminating government-supported oppression when there is no threat of violence in the background. The detractors of the nonviolent approach argue that in the cases of India and the U.S., there was a real threat of violent action if the nonviolent approach didn't work. Without that threat in the background, neither Gandhi nor King would have succeeded. . . .
>
> The defenders of nonviolent resistance respond that even ruthless governments eventually become reluctant to use violence against nonviolent protesters because the ruthlessness becomes so evident, even to the people who have previously not been protesting against it. . . .
>
> In the end, however, it seems that the basic assumptions of the Gandhi-King approach can still be called into question. Even if people do have some basic sense of justice, it seems to be a weak motive for action compared with self-preservation. It seems almost self-evident that sufficiently ruthless government leaders can keep most dissenters silent by the use of threats of death and injury, if not to the individual then to those he loves. It is also very questionable whether all or even most wars are the

> result of the use of violence to eliminate the oppressive policies of some dominant group. In fact, in international affairs it seems that wars are usually fought between one powerful nation or group of nations, and another powerful nation or groups of nations. The truly poor nations, economically and militarily, realize that any attempt to use force will bring on defeat. It seems that nonviolent resistance may offer an alternative to violence as a way to remove some injustices to protest oppression by ruling groups would do much to reduce the frequency of war.

What Mr. Glossop seems to be saying here is that people won't change, so we might as well resign ourselves to war. And that, of course, *is* the question. Will people change?

If people cannot be expected to change, then Glossop's book, *Confronting War*, may be considered a useful book, since it covers with surprising thoroughness about all the theories, arguments, and contentions on the subject. If you want to know about nuclear missiles, he has some tersely informative paragraphs on how they work. If you want to know what was the effect of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, the book provides what seems a reasonable version. Khrushchev, Mr. Glossop says, turned back the Russian ships bearing missiles to Cuba because the U.S. was far superior to the U.S.S.R. in nuclear armament.

> As a result of this incident, the Russians were convinced that it was not sufficient to have some missiles with nuclear warheads which could strike the U.S. They began a massive missile-building effort and increased their defensive capabilities against U.S. bombers. It was the stimulus of the Cuban missile crisis and its outcome that led the Russians to conclude that military power was necessary not just for defense of the homeland but also for success in international bargaining. In an anarchic world a nation which is obviously second in military power will be coerced into accepting terms dictated by the nation which is first in military power. Since most American leaders also recognize the validity of this principle, unless something is done there will be a virtually unlimited arms race to develop ever more destructive weapons and a technological race to try to create some kind of defense against a missile attack.

This book does have a short chapter on "Reforming the Attitudes of Individuals." It is not very encouraging. The author is aware that "it would be a gigantic mistake to believe that the institutionalized educational system, by itself, can do a great deal to reform the attitudes of individuals." He says, "If we want life to be more peaceful, we will need to make an effort to have both children and adults learn about it and want to use it." He recommends expanding "public knowledge about the philosophy and techniques of nonviolent resistance" and making known "some of the situations where nonviolent actions have brought about social change." The author declares, however, that since the problem of war is complex, no simple solution can be found. But one may think, on the other hand, that if you go deep enough into human motivation, there is after all a simple solution: Wars will cease when men refuse to fight them.

The issues are clarified by altering the framework of our questioning. Instead of asking what we can do to prevent other people from doing bad things like killing us, which usually brings the answer, "By killing them first," we might inquire: What kind of a person do I want to be? Was Socrates right when he said, "It is better to suffer than to do wrong"? All the world is now in an extreme of anxiety, wondering if and when the planet will be largely destroyed by an all-out nuclear war. This, it will be said, is "natural," yet one of the most natural of Americans, Henry David Thoreau, said:

> Of what consequence, though our planet explode, if there is no character involved in the explosion? In health we have not the least curiosity about such events. I would not run around the corner to see the world blow up.

What sort of humans would we be, if we adopted Thoreau's view? For them, would there be any likelihood of war? Are we, these days, trying to bring up our children to be without fear, regardless of what others do? These, it seems sure, are the questions that must be asked—and answered—as the only means to peace.

Yet slowly, new attitudes are arising. The full impact of Gandhi's influence is yet to be felt, although nonviolence, hardly heard or thought of a century ago, is now continually argued, and sometimes applied. More and more young men and women are rejecting war, refusing to put on uniforms. The publications of the pacifists are numerous and filled with accounts of war resisters in virtually every land. Eventually national policymakers will have to take them into account. The time may come, in the next century if not in this, when a great many people will make no distinction between war and insanity. A substantial number already have this view.

An example is the West German television journalist, Franz Alt, who from a supporter of NATO policies in 1981, became an impassioned advocate of the Sermon on the Mount. This change in outlook lost him his job on the television station, but his 117-page book, *Peace Is Possible* (Schocken, 1985, $12.95), subtitled *The Politics of the Sermon on the Mount,* sold more than half a million copies in Germany and is now available in translation in the United States. Alt, a Roman Catholic, is a skillful writer and well informed. He speaks with deep conviction to an increasingly disenchanted world. He wants those who read or hear him to take Jesus's Sermon seriously.

> You don't have to be a theologian to grasp the meaning and the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. And that's all that counts. Not theological hair-splitting. Jesus didn't care how many angels could dance on the head of a pin.
>
> Today, even atheists cite the teacher of nonviolence. Liberals consider his Sermon on the Mount liberal, revolutionaries find it revolutionary, and conservatives conservative. . . . Jesus does not speak to us in shallow terms. He addresses our very core, intimately and wholeheartedly. As far as Jesus is concerned, the private and the political cannot be kept apart.

This book is a good and wholesome symptom of the changes going on in human beings. The German novelist, Heinrich Boll, has said that it is influencing politics significantly, in Germany and elsewhere.

COMMENTARY
OBLIGATIONS AND A NEED

ALL the articles in this issue are concerned with learning new ways of thinking. Obviously, new ways of thinking and acting are necessary to put an end to war, as becomes evident in both the lead article and Review. To be wholly without fear was Thoreau's remedy, and this may indeed be the secret of peace, although we see at once that to put out of our minds a world already seething with the possibility of ruin and death is likely to prove difficult. On the other hand, some humans have achieved it, so it is not impossible.

Assuming the obligation of teaching our own children will also seem overwhelming to some, yet already love of their offspring have led more than a few to undertake it. This is certainly a new way of thinking for many of these parents, yet they seem to take pleasure in discovering that they have been equal to the task, learning how to use their ingenuity and how to understand the individual needs of the young. The prediction of Patricia Lines, that the children will be different, and good for the nation, seems a likely possibility. Enough such children might make for us another kind of country in the future.

The closing portion of this week's Frontiers is concerned with the biological and cultural necessity of a far-reaching change in our relations to the land. *Silent Spring*, Thomas Berry proposes, made this requirement evident to us in 1962, establishing the awareness that enabled him to write his essay on a bioregion. Most noticeable in what he says is the difference in his time sense. The profit-and-loss person thinks in terms of days and weeks; a bioregionalist finds it natural to consider geological spans of time. What does this suggest?

It suggests, most of all, that there is reason to have patience with ourselves. Both we and our ancestors, for all our lives, have acted almost entirely in response to the provocatives of the environment, which seemed to be saying, eat, drink, and be merry. But now the environment—the world of nature—is saying something different. And so are our hearts. Change your bad habits into good ones, we are told. But a generation hardly gives enough time for such a change. So, along with resolution, we need patience.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

EDUCATED TO BE DIFFERENT

CHANGES in socio-moral attitudes among the people of a country as large as the United States of necessity proceed slowly, but they take place. Two centuries ago, when the education of the young was largely in the hands of parents, the moral obligations of adults were so defined and practiced. Then, for a variety of reasons, the responsibility for teaching children was gradually transferred to public schools, which came into being during the nineteenth century, largely as a result of the efforts of Horace Mann and other public-spirited citizens. Today the trend is in the opposite direction. The public schools are widely regarded as bureaucratic monsters which subordinate education to smooth-running system and institutional objectives which have little or nothing to do with teaching. Responsible parents are reacting by teaching their children at home. In an article in *Education Week* for last May 15, "States Should Help, Not Hinder Parents' Home-Schooling Efforts," Patricia M. Lines, director of the Law and Education Center in Denver, begins:

> It is estimated that as many as 50,000 children are being instructed at home today. This is a dramatic increase compared with a decade ago, when experts thought the number to be around 10,000.
>
> Why are so many families doing it? Some object to the political or religious values they find in public schools. Some want to spend more time with young children before putting them in school, or with a child who is having trouble adapting to school and who needs individual attention at home. Whatever the reason, the burden parents undertake is enormous, and home schooling is not something they take on lightly. Parents—some of them former teachers—typically think through their teaching methods very carefully to meet the individual needs of their children.
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> The more puzzling question is: Why do some states oppose the home-schooling movement? Home instruction has a long and respectable history. John Stuart Mill received his early education from his father. In isolated places in early America, home schooling was the only choice. In a few places in Alaska, Montana, and other sparsely populated areas, this is still true.
>
> More important, home schooling seems to work. A single outstanding example was the admission to Harvard University last year of a young man who had been taught entirely at home. And from the broader pattern of available evidence one must conclude that, on average, children educated at home do well academically. Alaska and Arizona, two states that test home-schooled children, report that they perform at above-average levels as measured by nationally standardized tests. One study of children in a home tutorial network in Los Angeles showed that the children in the network scored higher in standardized tests than did the children in Los Angeles public schools. The "concern" about home schooling, therefore, should be tempered by the knowledge that more children are failing academically in public schools than at home.

This article continues, giving details on the policies of various states, revealing a growing acceptance of teaching at home. In states which insist that home schooling is illegal, parents are going to court to establish their right to decide about the education of their own children. Some states have recently declared home schooling legal, while others are unsuccessful in enforcing their laws. An irony noted by Patricia Lines is that often some states ignore the very real problem of truancy, while jailing parents who teach their children at home. The writer says:

> Full-time truants are difficult to count, but they may account for around 9 per cent of the school-age population. Thus there may be five million full-time truants in the nation. These are only estimates, but it seems safe to say that the population of truant children exceeds the population of children in unapproved home instruction by a factor of 100 or more.

She concludes:

> In states where home instruction is not legal, parents could wait for court rulings and then decide what they will do. But legislative change can be quicker, more sure, and less costly. States should be seeking ways to help rather than hinder parents who want to educate their children at home. The dedication and idealism of individuals form a great reservoir of untapped energy. The result will

probably be children who are educated to be different, but such differences can ultimately stimulate the intellectual development of a nation.

The complete reasonableness of this defense of home education is widely appealing. Thoughtful journalists pick up and repeat these ideas. A collection of opinions in the *San Francisco Chronicle* for last June 12 provides brief reviews of John Holt's *Teach Your Own* and Nancy Wallace's *Better Than School,* lists other material useful to home schoolers, and recommends Holt's newsletter, *Growing Without Schooling.*

Other expressions of independence of conventional attitudes are becoming common. A promotional sheet from Harper Junior Books, introducing Milton Meltzer's *Ain't Gonna Study War No More,* begins with a quotation:

> "When we choose to act illegally but morally, your authority becomes irrelevant. We are acting within different frameworks of duty, and I value my own, which I like to believe affirms life above yours, which would require me to kill at the command of men I neither know nor trust."

This is an extract from a letter by Russ Ford, written in 1982, in reply to a letter from the United States Department of Justice requiring him to register for the draft. The Harper sheet sketches the history of opposition to war in America, starting with William Penn and the Society of Friends, then names other notable resisters—"such as Henry David Thoreau, Elihu Burritt, Jane Addams, Jeanette Rankin, Roger Baldwin, and Martin Luther King, who opposed the Mexican-American War, two World Wars, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam War in this century." Publication and promotion of this book by Harper, one of the largest publishing concerns in the world, illustrates the changing temper of the times.

Meanwhile, the Winter-Spring '85 Newsletter of the California Humanities Association repeats a story told by Kenzaburo Oë, internationally known Japanese novelist, in a lecture in San Francisco in 1983:

> In his opening remarks, he related the true story of how as a boy, he and most of his fellow villagers after the Japanese surrender met their first American, a G.l. who drove up alone in a Jeep to their remote village on the island of Shikoku. Also living in the village was an uncle of Oë's, whom many viewed as a "mad intellectual" because he had obtained a university education, including a knowledge of the Greek classics and English. While other villagers cowered in their homes fearing the worst, Oë"s uncle calmly went out to meet the G.I. Reassured to find the G.I. carrying a copy of Plato's writings in his Jeep, the uncle and the American immediately fell into conversation. The G.I., on the one hand, was apprehensive about the degree of hostility American occupiers might face after their devastating air raids. Oë said his uncle, on the other hand, must have been a Neoplatonist because he shared with the G.I. his native villager's belief in reincarnation. He explained to the American how in a nearby forest where the villagers buried their dead, they also believed that their departed spirits were reborn again into new human life. After his talk with the G.I., Oë's uncle was able to allay the villagers' fears, some of whom thought they would be mistreated or even shot by their captors. And, according to Oë, his uncle became an instantaneous hero to his fellow villagers who subsequently sought him out as a teacher of English.

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Teachers as well as parents will be interested to know about a valuable book published this year by Harper & Row—*Home Care for the Chronically Ill or Disabled Child* by Monica Loose Jones ($12.95). Mrs. Jones, mother of a child with a rare birth defect—infantile spinal muscular atrophy—did not discover this ill in her child until she was thirteen months old. Then she found out all she could about it and took extraordinary care of the little girl until she died at nine and a half. All that she learned about muscular atrophy, and about other childhood ills, is set down in this remarkably complete book on child care. Distraught parents may learn from it the calm they need, and how to ease the child's life.

FRONTIERS

Cycles of Change

Two currents of change in the United States—at different levels and utterly opposed—are now going on. Both can be called cultural changes. One of these lines of change has attention in the *Nation* for June 8 of this year, in three articles. The first of the three, beginning on the cover, is "White Collar Crime Is Big Business" by Mark Green and John F. Berry. They begin with "prominent examples":

> Paul Thayer, former chair of LTV, is sentenced to four years in jail for perjuring himself to a Federal commission over insider trading activities. E.E. Hutton confesses to engaging in a multibillion-dollar check-kiting scheme. General Electric admits it has defrauded the Pentagon by passing on bogus costs. The First National Bank of Boston owns up to violating the sank Secrecy Act because it failed to report $1.22 billion in large cash transactions, some of which, according to the Justice Department, involved laundering drug money. Cartier is accused of contractor fraud by the House Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.

This is only the beginning of the list of offenders, which stretches over three pages. "Will this latest rash of corporate illegality elicit the same public outrage as street crime?" the writers ask, replying, "Hardly." Street crime scares people, while the losses of very nearly all citizens from the depredations of the rich and affluent remain unfelt except indirectly. Yet the bill is almost unimaginable. "Corporate illegality is a several-hundred-billion-dollar albatross around the economy's neck." Moreover, dishonesty at this level is catching. Bad companies drive out or corrupt the good ones. A specialist in this field has said: "The pharmaceutical company which markets a new drug based on fraudulent test results undercuts its competitors who are still marketing the properly tested drugs, and may cause them to accept similar methods."

Another story in the same issue, on the mergers among the media now going on, is by Herbert I. Schiller. He says:

> A wave of media mergers this spring has placed the so-called cultural industries at the center of the transnational corporate economy. A few of the more prominent deals include:
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> The American Broadcasting Companies, a $3.7 billion enterprise, is acquired by Capital Cities Communications, a mere billion dollar baby. This combination represents the largest merger outside the oil industry in U.S. history. Metromedia, itself recently bought out, sells seven key television stations to Rupert Murdoch and Martin Davis for $2 billion. Murdock and Martin Davis already own 20th Century-Fox. CBS regarded by some as the Establishment, repels one takeover bid and braces itself for others.

The point, of course, is the loss of actual cultural influence. The big media, corporately owned, don't have any influence worth talking about, except that they weaken our minds. As the *Nation* editor, Victor Navasky, says elsewhere in this issue:

> Every small magazine has its equivalent of Frank Walsh's famous story about how he wrote a series on railroads for the Hearst papers which reached 10 million people and not one reader said a word to him. Then he published the same material in an article for *The Nation*, whose circulation was then 27,000. "The day *The Nation* went on the Washington newsstands," he said, "my telephone started ringing. I heard from editors, broadcasters and congressmen."

While the *Nation*, and a few other papers of like intelligence and intent, may have more circulation now, the manipulative grip of the mass media on the psyches of the great majority grows stronger, while the ruthless indifference to moral questions of the managers of these organs of "opinion" has crystallized around the sole purpose of marketing goods and services, and calculating dishonesty on the part of these "leaders" is now, as the *Nation* shows, to be expected as a matter of habit. Self-interest is the rule, not the exception. Massive breakdown of such a system is inevitable, and may come sooner than we think.

The other current of influence in the United States, by no means so evident, lies in the gradual recognition on the part of a few individuals that

the time has come for human beings to begin thinking about their lives as part of a larger undertaking than the pursuit of self-interest. These individuals work to reverse the tide of habitual exploitation and conflict by showing that there are ways of living that do not lead to social and economic collapse, but build patterns of understanding. For the most part their thinking has to do with our relations with the land and the seas. We mean such individuals as Wendell Berry, Wes Jackson, John and Nancy Todd, John Jeavons of Ecology Action, Peter Berg of the Planet Drum Foundation, and others of like mind and intention.

An illustration of work along these lines is publication by the Planet Drum Foundation (Box 31251, San Francisco, Calif. 94131) of an informative pamphlet, *The Lower Hudson River Basin as a Bioregional Community* by Thomas Berry. This region reaches from Troy, New York (just above Albany) southward to Sandy Hook and the Rockaway Peninsula. The writer gives its geological and ecological history and tells what happened to this fertile region as a result of its settlement by Europeans and then by the industrialization of the area. The "modern" period of this bioregion began with the withdrawal of the glacier some ten thousand years ago.

The writer is interested in showing us a different way of thinking about the land, its history and possibilities. The first white settlers came to America filled with desires to obtain land, spread out, and prosper. Thomas Berry inaugurates another view. After the recession of the glacier, he says—

> All the living forms in the region are newly arrived and are still engaged in a process of biological adaptation. This adaptation can be considered in three main periods: the period prior to the arrival of the European peoples, the period from 1609 until 1962, when Rachel Carson published the first critical survey of the biological degradation taking place throughout the north American continent in her book, *Silent Spring;* and the period after 1962 when a new attitude toward the natural world began to influence our relations with the estuary. Because this last period is already begun in its conscious expression this present essay has become possible.

There is drama in this new way of thinking. As Mr. Berry puts it:

> The mechanistic model whereby the Hudson community is seen simply as objective reality, or as natural resource for human use, needs to be changed to the organic model of a regional community with its value in itself. The human appreciation of the region must be seen as an effort of self-understanding of the community, carried out by the community, in and through its human mode of expression.

The die-back of culture as a result of misuse of the land and the seas is already well on the way. "The real difficulty of the various declining communities along the river is precisely that they think of themselves too much in political or commercial terms. Consequently they look for their renewal through these agencies rather than through a more effective relation to the land and the river and their fertility." Yet the change has already begun and Mr. Berry lists some of the good things happening.