

## AN INTERVIEW WITH E. F. SCHUMACHER--II

### II

QUESTION: After leaving the Coal Board you had more time for directing the work of the ITDG. But you also serve as the President of the Soil Association in Britain, and this must occupy some portion of your time as well. I'm aware that the Soil Association is very much like our own organic farming and gardening movement, but I wonder if you would talk more specifically about its work and how you got involved?

E.F.S.: In the Thirties Sir Albert Howard wrote *An Agricultural Testament*, a book which questioned modern agricultural technology and asserted that there is a more natural way of farming, utilizing compost and so on. The book was of course widely ridiculed, but it really hit a few of us who thought Howard was a most experienced and intelligent man. In the Forties some of these people led by Lady Eve Balfour set up the Soil Association. I was not one of the founders, since at that time I was economic advisor to the British military government in Germany.

Q.: This was after World War II, then.

E.F.S.: In 1947. They got a bit of land and established what they called the Haughley Experiment. The land was divided up into a number of fields which were farmed in three basic ways—wholly organically, wholly chemically without livestock, and with what they called the orthodox British system, namely some livestock but also chemical treatment of the land.

They carried on this experimental work for twenty years, taking precise measurements of what happens to the soil, the economics of it, the yields, et cetera. Such an experiment is very expensive, and a private organization whose main income is private subscriptions and donations finds it very hard to carry on.

In 1970 they asked me whether I could come in as president, and I was very happy to take this on as a purely voluntary activity. But I came in at the moment when it was impossible to maintain the Haughley Experiment, and my own assessment was that it had served its purpose.

Q.: Meaning that the experiments had accumulated enough data about organic methods?

E.F.S.: Yes, but the very word experiment had been misleading. You can get conclusive results from experiments only in a laboratory, where your methodology is perfectly clean and controlled. But when you're actually growing crops and raising cattle, which depend on the skill of management and all sorts of fortuitous factors like the weather, you cannot establish anything compellingly. You can only demonstrate possibilities.

So I therefore came to this conclusion and persuaded the Association that we couldn't keep the farms. The question was then: Do we go into voluntary liquidation, having done our job, or is there more to be accomplished?

Well, we found there was much more to be done. There was first of all an increasing awareness in society that we need alternative farming systems, if only because chemicalized farming is so dependent on oil, and because these methods diminish the humus content and break down the structure of the soil. So task number one for the Soil Association became training. We've established training courses which are actually being carried on now by established academic institutions.

Q.: You mean orthodox universities in Britain are now teaching organic farming methods to their students?

E.F.S.: Again, it's a cooperative venture. There are three academic institutions who are very forthcoming and give us their facilities to use, and there are some highly trained individuals in those places who are actively on our side. And this is all arranged for the purpose of training people how to farm organically, having already established that it can be done.

Q.: Just administering this training program for the large numbers of people in Britain who must want to learn organic methods would alone seem a full-time job for the Soil Association.

E.F.S.: Yes, but it is only part of our work. The organic farmers in Britain are producing a better product, but as long as they sell their produce through the ordinary channels of trade, they don't get the honest premium they deserve. So, as our second task, we have organized a marketing company for organic produce. This required the creation and registration of a symbol that we award to organic farmers. Of course we couldn't register such a symbol until we could convince the authorities that we could monitor the quality of the produce, and with the help of a German scientist, a Dr. Rusch, we developed a soil test to insure that organic methods are being used.

And for a third task, we have set up an organic farmers' cooperative, so that the farmers can gain a bit more strength in terms of credit and purchasing power and a few other things. . . . All of these activities are of course accompanied by the production of a certain amount of literature and propaganda, as well as running conferences from time to time. And yes, this work does indeed absorb more than a good part of my psychic energy.

Q.: In *Small Is Beautiful* and in articles in *Resurgence*, you have talked about the Mansholt Plan for European agriculture, which I interpreted as a barefaced attempt to totally wipe out family farms in Europe and substitute agribusiness methods. Have you ever had an opportunity to

discuss with Dr. Mansholt himself what these plans would mean for Europe?

E.F.S.: In February of 1974 there was a great meeting in Switzerland called the European Management Forum and one of the speakers was Mansholt. After his talk there was a so-called discussion, but the audience was so large that you had to write your question on a slip of paper, which was then handed up to the platform. My question was, "Isn't what you have said today in total contradiction to the Mansholt Plan?" I had no expectation that this would be one of the bits of paper he answered since there were more questions than could be dealt with. But Mansholt picked it up and he read it out and he said, "The answer is yes, I have changed my mind. At that time I didn't know what I know today and I wouldn't do it again." His response was really first-class, although I personally think he might make it clear to more people. But the agricultural policy is under review anyhow. . . .

Q.: Because of the oil situation?

E.F.S.: Yes, and with the British being in, the whole machine is creaking now, so these plans for European farming are no longer as dangerous as they were. But the idea in its original form was simply a townies idea. One of Mansholt's expressions was, "In this day and age, people expect to work a five day week and the five day cow has not yet been invented. Therefore we must amalgamate farms into bigger and bigger units, must get four or five million people off the land and into the towns, and then if we put science into it we might even get control over the climate and have an absolutely organized production line and to hell with nature." . . . I'm putting it very crudely, but this was the basic concept.

Q.: In looking at the problems of community development in Third World countries and here in the industrialized countries as well, we find ourselves talking a lot about overcoming poverty. I'm struck by the fact that what most of us in the West call poverty must seem like a great abundance to people in many developing nations.

E.F.S.: Purely quantitative measures of poverty don't often tell us very much. During the Great Depression I saw unemployed workers in England whose whole gait showed that they were broken men. Yet their actual cash unemployment insurance was more than the income of a Spanish peasant who greeted you with open arms, whose eyes shone with manliness, and who asked you to come into his hovel and share everything with him.

Actually, I have found over the years that even the word poverty itself is not really accurate in describing the conditions I am talking about. There needs to be another word, and that word is misery. Misery is the absolute bottom level, where you don't have enough to even begin to keep body and soul together. Next comes the level we might call poverty, where people can reach the fullness of humanity but in a modest and frugal way and with nothing really to spare. Then comes a level of what I might call sufficiency, where you do have things to spare. This kind of life was the normal condition of Western Europe for many centuries. And finally comes a level of surfeit, which is limitless.

I would say that the bottom layer of misery and the top layer of surfeit are both very unhealthy. But between sufficiency and poverty, I don't really argue which is better. I'm not interested in helping people who are in poverty in this sense. If they want to live better, I mean it's their affair, they're not drowning.

Q.: So what you're really saying is that the ITDG is mainly interested in helping people who want to pull themselves out of misery, not poverty.

E.F.S.: That's right. In these cases, it is an absolute duty to go and help, and help without stint.

Q.: You've said that when you first started your efforts with intermediate technology some Third World people called you an imperialist and fascist. Have you often run up against the

criticism that any kind of help you give a poor person is really only a form of patronization?

E.F.S.: I have, but it was from a different point of view. Some Third World people thought our intermediate technology was a device of the rich to keep them in their place. These are misunderstandings you can't guard against, and they clear up when people realize that to try for the moon is no good.

I have recently heard another, more serious charge that the slightest thing you do for people, even in the spirit of helping them help themselves, will then only lead to further population explosion, pollution and depletion of natural resources. This kind of criticism I do not accept because it is pure negativism.

Q.: Population control has certainly become one of the world's most touchy subjects in the last few years. At a recent U.N. Conference on population I recall that the Third World countries accused the rich countries of making plans to control the growth of populations in their countries. I've noticed that you don't really talk much about population control in your writing and I wonder if you would explain why?

E.F.S.: There are a number of subjects which serve as escape hatches if you really don't want to work. Population, land reform, the political system, corruption and no doubt you'll think of one or two others, are all problems where the very people who ask the question already know subconsciously that they can't do anything about it. And so they love talking about it. They point fingers and say unless you solve this or that problem then all your work will be useless. . . . I can't solve the problem of political systems in Latin America. And if I went there trying to solve it, I guess my stay would be either unduly shortened or unduly prolonged. And then I couldn't work at all.

I distinguish between queen bees and worker bees. In our intermediate technology work, we're not queen bees, we're worker bees. We don't sit

in some ivory tower trying to decide which is the number one and which is the number two problem. We get to work on the work that we can do.

Q.: But certainly it seems obvious that unchecked growth of the world's population will have a devastating impact on our future.

E.F.S.: Looking at this question of population purely academically, the first thing I would have to say is that talking about *world* population is already somewhat feeble-minded, because in terms of population the world is not a unified system. It's not like the level of a lake that rises when you pour more water into it.

The United States is certainly—at least to a European—one of the great open spaces in the world. You could put the entire world population into the United States and the density of people would then be roughly that of England now. The problems of Bangladesh are virtually insoluble because here you have these many tens of millions of people living on a flood plain where nobody ought to be living, and this is what happens when population increases beyond the real resources. Nothing much can happen in Zambia until there is a somewhat higher density of population.

Certain populations need to grow, others have to watch their step very carefully. It's everywhere different and we should clarify those differences before we attempt to talk sensibly about population problems.

Q.: In your writing you often talk about changes in our basic values and about "moral reconstruction" as a key in education. I'm certainly not asking you for a written-out program, but what are some of your thoughts about how a new moral climate could be established?

E.F.S.: You're now referring to this little book of mine, *Small Is Beautiful*. In that book some of the chapters are queen bee chapters, some of them are worker bee chapters and in some no doubt it's intermingled. Of course one

can sit back—and this is not an entirely illegitimate activity—and analyze the dilemmas facing us.

I could say that Western civilization is a great deviation from the universal tradition of mankind into a gross form of materialism and that in the last analysis all our problems are due to this deviation. We are like Dante who wrote at the beginning of the great *Divine Comedy*, "In the middle of my life, I suddenly came to myself. I woke up and found myself in a thick, dark forest. I had lost my way." This can happen to a whole civilization and I think we are now waking up like Dante in a darkness and finding ourselves surrounded by problems on which we work ever more frantically but find we can't solve. And until we have a change in our hearts these problems will remain insoluble.

Insights and changes of the kind we are needing can come in two ways. Insight can come just from sheer insight and conscious thought, or it can come as a result of suffering. It is no accident that, if my general view of China is correct, the fundamental changes in their society have come about only after a long history of the most appalling civil wars and disasters, people perishing and going through fire as it were. That kind of suffering has produced people with a very clear insight into what is really necessary.

Q.: Our highly industrialized society is already clearly in the beginning stage of tremendous changes in its basic concepts and values and all its notions of growth and progress. I come down along with you squarely on the side of conscious thought as the best way to find a new focus and direction. But I also observe that our society still seems determined to suffer a great deal in its own way before its people learn what is really necessary.

E.F.S.: Everything, you see, finally comes down to some interpretation of why we are here on earth at all. And this is the great break that's happened. We live in a civilization where such questions are really not asked. It's below our

proper dignity to even discuss them. But these are very vital questions, because if we are here for no purpose at all, as the theory of mindless evolution suggests, or if we are only an accidental collection of atoms, as Bertrand Russell used to say, then the whole thing is utterly meaningless. Man becomes a cosmic, tragic accident. There's nothing beyond death and we have no particular task here on earth because after all who should have given us a task. And the very word task is itself meaningless unless we're held to account, and of course who should hold us to account. This whole attitude produces the logic that I am primarily a consumer, a consumer of agreeable things, convenience, anything that can save any bother, or any pain and labor.

Now there's a different fundamental metaphysics, to put it very simply, that life is a school. Certain things have been laid into us, and we are given, tradition says, this position of the human being to complete ourselves. This process is, as the Buddhists say, "hard to obtain." One then becomes relatively uninterested, still tempted, but uninterested in all the little conveniences that are quite agreeable to consume. I mean I roughed it in India and other places and when I came back into a conveniently arranged hotel room I of course breathed a sigh of relief. But I didn't mistake that hotel room as an implementation of my life's task.

When the time has come to die, you die and there's nothing wrong with that because you're shedding this educational cross of your body and are much freer then to do with your mind or soul or spirit what is your ultimate destiny. Except that if you have allowed your mind or spirit to deteriorate during that short period of visible life, you are then in very poor condition. The greater freedom doesn't do you any good, just as excessive freedom for an unstable people doesn't do them any good. They will just find ways of utterly ruining themselves. . . . I don't know whether we should go into such things of

philosophy. But it has a lot to do with all our quite definite mundane problems.

Q.: No, this is good, this is exactly what I wanted to get into talking about. There are so many people today who are making a break with the old values of industrial society and yet who are still searching for what you have called a sense of their own center, a sort of inner clarity about who they are and where they are going.

E.F.S.: This is certainly true. On a more worldly level, I would assert that the logical mind is an instrument, a tool like a knife or a sewing machine. Behind that instrument is another level of person that decides how to use it. We call this judgment or the choice made by our will, although some people of course deny that we have any will.

Now the extraordinary thing is that if you do find the inner center, or you can call it the higher center, then your judgment becomes much better and your mind functions much more clearly. You can see through so many things and say, "Ah well, this approach to the problem can only add to the confusion, it can't solve anything." You can then withdraw from that particular wild goose chase.

But if you decide to try something different from what the main stream of the tide is doing, and you go into it merely with your logical mind, you may really find yourself circling without a rudder. . . . You know, people want to get back closer to nature. Well, it's not very easy to make a living out of nature, and you can see it from all the many poor peasants in the world who are already born into a lot of experience with nature that we townies just don't have. So if you think farming is merely a technical problem, and I say this as the propagator of intermediate technology, you will get very easily discouraged.

Q.: So you think this may account for many of the problems and failures of people who have tried to go back to the land?

E.F.S.: I think it may explain the sad countenance of many people who are trying to do the right thing. A person said to me a few days

ago, and he was a nice person, "I have some land and, I'm one of the lucky ones, I have some money. And with that money I want to set up on this land something relatively self-sufficient and ecologically sound."

Now I felt it incumbent upon myself to say, "Well, you know, it's not so jolly easy. But if you have some money behind you, you can afford mistakes that would ordinarily ruin you. So do it by all means, but go around and get the best advice you can. Read John and Sally Seymour's book and you'll see it's not roses all the way. But you will also find it's exhilarating and splendid, and productive of tremendous joy and cheerfulness and the things you miss are as nothing to the things you gain."

And then he told me, "Yes, but you know I can't get rid of this feeling that not everybody has land, and not everybody has money behind them, so that I would be doing something on the basis of an accidental privilege."

That person felt guilty, and so many other people are carrying burdens which prevent them from doing cheerful productive work. People may want to work to build a new and sounder life in the country instead of hanging around New York City as office workers. But then they begin to feel guilty and think that they have no right to leave the city because there are so many other New Yorkers who can't get out.

Q.: So you're saying in order to do any really useful work, people must rid themselves of all this extra baggage.

E.F.S.: This baggage has to be thrown away and people must realize that their first task is to become part of the cure and not remain a part of the disease. And when they are themselves healthy and cheerful and upstanding, then they will have a better chance of helping the unfortunate find their own solutions.

I once pulled a man out of the sea, quite a long distance from shore. Only two people went out to try and rescue him, another man and

myself. This other fellow I immediately found was not much of a swimmer and when we reached the drowning man, he lost his nerve and started shouting for help. And I told him to get the hell out of there and first look after himself. I didn't know yet if I could do anything with the one drowning man, but good Lord, I couldn't have two on my hands.

So I would say the first thing is that you must not yourself be a drowning man. You must not be part of the problem, you must be part of the answer. . . . No, you must not be part of the problem, period. Whether you can be part of the answer depends on a certain element of surplus bouyancy, which then expresses itself in cheerfulness.

BRUCE WILLIAMSON

Denver, Colo.

## *REVIEW* HISTORIC ABERRATION

ONE way of clarifying what we know or think is to keep track of how conceptions of knowledge change. For this purpose good books on basic questions written in years past are useful tools. What, for example, constituted the best thinking about the state, half a century or more ago? How does it stand up today?

A fresh translation of Franz Oppenheimer's *The State* (Free Life Editions, \$3.95) gives opportunity for such a review. George Woodcock's description of this work (in the *Nation* for last Nov. 29) is so succinct that we repeat it here:

*The State* is a forgotten minor classic by the pre-World War I German sociologist, Franz Oppenheimer. As C. Hamilton points out in his introduction, it is one of the few books of any importance which analyze the state as a social phenomenon rather than rationalizing and justifying its operations. Oppenheimer's essential argument is that the state is based not on contract but always on conflict and conquest. He embodies this insight within an evolutionary attitude, which traces the state through various ascending forms, and which allows him an optimism that few writers following a similar quest today would sustain so easily: he prophesies the final transformation of the state, so that mankind will eventually move forward "from war to peace, from the hostile splitting up of the hordes to the Freeman's Citizenship."

Why should we want to know about the state? Because it makes endless problems for us—a sufficient reason. Analysis of how it came into being might help us to understand the state and perhaps to control its excesses, or even to eliminate it altogether, if that seems desirable. But most of the accounts of the origin of the state seem speculative in the extreme. Rousseau's description of the pre-political "state of nature" was purely imaginary—he claimed for it no historical truth—and his contract theory was only a metaphor, a way of giving form to the tacit agreements of human beings concerning how they will live together.

Oppenheimer gathers evidence to show that the state resulted from the alliance of men for the purposes of conquest and exploitation:

The State, completely in its genesis and almost completely during the first stages of its existence, is a social institution, forced by a victorious group over the vanquished, and securing itself against revolt from within and attacks from abroad. Teleologically, this dominion had no other purpose than the economic exploitation of the vanquished by the victors.

He makes a clear distinction between "society" and the state. Society is a non-aggressive human alliance. It is—as Charles Hamilton says in his Introduction to Oppenheimer's book—"a vast and fluid network of individuals and groups that interact voluntarily on the basis of shared economic interests or on the basis of feelings of identity and community." The state, Oppenheimer says, is "the alienated form of society." It is "first of all an apparatus of domination."

A particular value of this book, especially of Hamilton's introduction, is the attention given to so-called "stateless societies." They have existed in the past, they exist today, and a little looking about will disclose the "remarkable spectacle of societies positively maintaining themselves at a high level of integration without any obvious specialized means of enforcement." Actually, exploration of the references to stateless societies given by Mr. Hamilton might prove more valuable than reading Oppenheimer, although the study of history through the latter's eyes would help to erase many popular illusions. Mr. Hamilton concludes:

While his optimism and belief in evolution may be misplaced for us who live in an increasingly centralized and politicalized world, Oppenheimer's analysis can be very helpful as we try to understand and change our world. . . . The element of conflict and conquest has played a part in the origins of most states. Together with the emphasis on the use of the political means and the class nature of the state's interests, we can begin to see history a little differently. No longer can we say that states are benign in the process of history.

Besides the study of stateless societies, it should be useful to consider the forms of agriculture, industry, and human association which involve no necessity for state organization, and also the ideas of human good and progress which would render the state superfluous. Interestingly, when discussing the origin of the United States of America, identified as one of "the most powerful stateformations in history," Oppenheimer speaks of the great migration to America of people from Old World countries, suggesting that in this case there was "an infection from afar with 'statehood' brought in by the infected of foreign lands." The immigrants united to take possession of the lands of the stateless societies of the Indians. A passage in Edgar L. Hewett's *Ancient Life in the American Southwest* (1930) contrasts the settlers with the native Americans:

The European brought to the Indian world (America) a densely materialistic mind developed by ages of experience in human society that could have no other destiny than that which has overtaken it. It was a racial mind formed by immemorial strife in a restricted environment—an environment which fostered distrust, war, destruction, armament for offense and defense. . . .

The European mind was not prepared to understand a race so different from its own in character and culture as was the native American. Its disposition was to subdue, to subjugate and to convert. One can readily understand the paralysis that would overtake a non-warlike race in such an unequal conflict. To subdue was comparatively easy with superior material equipment of horses, guns, and training in destructive warfare. To convert was a different matter, involving eradication of age-old culture, the destruction of the soul of a race.

Indeed, as Hamilton says, no longer can we say that states are "benign." Whether they were ever benign is an equally important question. We honor our own state on the theory that it affords to citizens the right to choose their own "way of life." But the claim is questionable. Philip Slater remarks in *Earthwalk*:

First of all, it is incorrect to say that such [cooperative] communities have always chosen "progress" when given a choice. Our own country contains many Amerindian tribes who have clung

desperately, against absurd odds, to their own way of life, and others may be found in every part of the world. Again and again individuals in "primitive" societies have made lucid and articulate comparisons between their own and Western culture, showing a clear understanding of the latter and what they found wanting in it. Indeed, their criticisms are substantially the same as those made by Westerners themselves.

Furthermore, what is glossed over as "choosing" Western culture often turns out to be more a matter of having it jammed down one's throat. Decimated by armed slaughter and Western diseases, flooded with Western artifacts, and with their own institutions overthrown by violence, it has become a matter of adopting Western ways or having no coherent culture at all. In South Vietnam we have created a whole nation of displaced persons, many of whom will undoubtedly "choose" Western patterns. . . .

Cooperative assumptions always give way to competitive ones when one powerful body begins to play by its own competitive rules. This is all it takes to destroy trust and give rise to a competitive system. The history of the West is simply the progressive dissemination of this infection: A dominant society brutalizes a simple one, which ultimately overwhelms its oppressor and becomes itself an oppressor.

To say that Western peoples became dissatisfied with primitive life and moved beyond it is therefore misleading. It would be more accurate to say that cultural selection has populated the world with dissatisfied people—people incapable of enjoying the world around them as it is.

We haven't left the subject of the state and its origins. People form states; the point is to find out why. Why do they choose to establish an "alienated form of society"? The point is to discover why some forms of social organization lead to aggressive wars, social and moral confusion, and genocidal behavior, while other forms of association have quite other consequences. As Hamilton says:

The point is not to suggest that the stateless and near stateless societies which have existed were in any way perfect. They were not, but they did exist and they did attempt to solve social problems in a way different from the usual reliance on force, centralization and the political means. Stateless societies have been remarkably viable.



## *COMMENTARY* **THE TWO WAYS**

CROWDED out of the concluding portion of the interview with E. F. Schumacher was this reply to a question about the achievements of present-day China:

E.F.S.: The Chinese estimate that it takes about thirty peasant work-years to keep one young person at a Chinese university for one year. This young person's natural tendency after five years of schooling and graduation may be to go into a fashionable district of Shanghai, where many like him are already gathered, and there form a sort of mutual admiration society. But the "brutality" of the system is such that the student is told no, you won't do that. After you've consumed one hundred and fifty peasant work-years, the peasants ought to get something back from you. You will therefore go, not to Shanghai, but into a remote village where no educated person has been all these years and see how you can help.

And then the graduate finds in many cases, so I hear, that what he's learned during his five years in college is of no use to the peasant. He then comes back to his school and says, for goodness sakes, if we have to pay back the peasants, then we had better learn something at the universities that is of use to them. So there is this feedback and the curriculum can change very quickly indeed.

Q.: It would be great if we could transfer that Chinese sense of community participation to the United States or Britain, but without the kind of coercion which the Chinese are able to use.

E.F.S.: What I've said about China is second-hand. My colleagues have been there, I've read a lot of literature, but I haven't experienced it on my own skin. And I'm like the rest of us, a person who doesn't like to be commandeered.

But why do we have educational institutions? So new impulses can happen. It does make sense,

after all, that if you have been educated by society, then society should get something back. This can happen in one of two ways. It can happen by compulsion or it can happen by a kind of moral climate having been established where it's understood that you accept this responsibility.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves ITEMS

THE *New Schools Exchange Letter* for last January is a valuable nuts-and-bolts resource for teachers. Called the "1976 Wall Calendar & Idea Book," it has two pages devoted to each month of the year, but since there's not much relation between the teaching ideas provided and the months, this publication should be as useful next December as it was last January. (Order from New Schools Exchange, Pettigrew, Ark. 72752—\$1.00.) The text accompanying one of the months has this informative review of Sylvia Ashton-Warner's *Teacher*:

For beginning readers she uses pictures of inner experiences (mommy, daddy, baby, kiss, etc.) to elicit their [the children's] captions of these illustrations. She works with the feelings the child has for family and friends, as these first words are an integral part of the child's being. As each child gives her these words she writes them on large tough cards and gives them to the child. Together they make boxes for these cards. Verbs are introduced (go, see) and feelings (sad, mad, afraid, happy). From this point, each time the child expresses feelings or relates dreams she writes down the key words expressed. They make writing books together and enter key vocabulary that has been remembered in the back for reference. Children illustrate these books, page by page, word by word. They sit together and tell each other their words. If a word is forgotten the card is discarded and the word is reintroduced the next time it comes up. The word box is a circular file—as words are learned and entered in the back of the writing book, the cards are discarded and replaced by new words. This goes on until the child has at least 40 words that he remembers. They then begin organic writing. The lower case is used, not the upper case, to prevent confusion. The children copy their own words with pencils, and slowly begin to organize their key words into sentences. There is no study of composition and no criticizing after the fact; however, the teacher does make corrections while the child is actually doing the writing. That way errors are not learned. Creativity is stressed. The teacher must be mobile and available, moving about the room while the children write. Children work on their books for, say, two one-hour periods during the day. Each morning the

teacher spends time writing dictated stories and new words on cards. Work is done with dream content. The experience comes from within. Spelling begins when children have enough confidence and words to write their words on the blackboard for others to see. New words emerge from storytelling time and play time. As the books grow, the children begin to sit in a circle and read aloud to each other. This encourages intimacy and is not competitive but rather a shared activity. The children help each other learn to read! Study time is rotated with play time and tension is eased with creative dramatics, music, water play, etc. Reading as a process requires time and patience. From a good, solid foundation, good reading will follow. Work at it regularly.

An introductory section begins by saying that real education takes place both outside and inside the school:

In every city or small town, much untapped learning potential lies in the people, places and processes that we encounter every day. Use your environment—explore it and share what you learn with others. Encourage self-learning. . . .

So, begin by focusing on real experiences and the development of new learning situations that are independent of traditional books and learning products. We are all students. Actively support and arrange apprentice programs. Visit *people* like a carpenter or a pharmacist, *placer* like the airport, courtroom, quarry, steel plant, garment factory, museum or zoo, and observe *processes* like candy-making, city planning, electricity generation and tree-planting. Talk about your visits, how you felt in each environment, and how people felt about their work.

How are shoes made? Where does garbage go? How is blood typed? How is food processed? What are additives? How was this page printed? What can you learn from your next-door neighbor? How is a picture taken and developed? How are roads built and maintained? How is a play produced? What can you learn about voting? Who works at a radio station? How is a house built and by whom? Where does milk come from? What can you learn standing on the street corner? What can you learn from a tree? When you put money in a savings account—what happens to it? How is money made? What happens to old, worn-out bills? What does an architect do? How does an automobile work? How do you find your way around a library? How are weather phenomena caused? What can you do with a magnet?

What are stars? What is it like to live in the country?  
The city?

The gamut of suggestions from month to month is wide and rich, including such ideas as puppetry, indoor gardening, planting trees, building houses, and natural and applied science projects. Lots of references are given, with good extracts from books and other materials.

One suggestion seems questionable—the idea of arranging for the "safe expression of aggressive feelings," including having things saved up for smashing, and a "screaming time" when there are pent-up feelings. Experienced teachers say that this sort of thing is not the best way to redirect such energies, and that permissively arranged screaming could lead to even more keyed-up states verging on hysteria. Virginia Axline found other ways of dealing with Dibs' hostilities, and Sylvia Ashton-Warner learned to quiet children's upset reactions to violence in the home by having them write something about it down.

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Years ago we printed here Virginia Naeve's account of "Creativity in an Unprepared Atmosphere," telling how her children enjoyed themselves playing on the locations of abandoned building projects and places like dump heaps, and about the wild and wonderful constructions which resulted. Then there was another story about a vacant lot some English children turned into a funky paradise for playing, and of the endless ingenuities which resulted. Now something like this has been put together by the city of Huntington Beach, Calif. "Adventure Playground" is described by its supervisor, Bill Vance, in a "How To" manual which can be ordered (\$1.00) from the author at the Huntington Beach Recreation and Parks Department, P.O. Box 190, City Hall, Huntington Beach, Calif. 92648.

Bill Vance makes deserted areas and rude and crude surroundings sound like delightful possibilities. "Virtually any area that is hidden, and within any reasonable distance of the

populace is suitable for development as an Adventure Playground." (Pictures and description of the Huntington Beach playground appeared in *Sunset* magazine for October, 1975.)

## *FRONTIERS*

### Sprouts From Contradiction

IN the *New York Times* for Dec. 28, 1975, Marcus Raskin listed the guiding principles of the Federation for Democratic Reconstruction, a group formed in Washington, D.C., early last-year. We quote the first and the last:

The transformation of society is accomplished by people who are not political. It occurs when people begin to feel that the contradictions and antagonisms of their lives are too great and that to continue living out such contradictions is not "worth it." Citizen organizers can take this feeling and turn it toward positive ends by showing, through discussion and example, how the "waste" of society and one's life is in fact a resource. Finding such energies is the beginning of liberation.

It is important to remember that all Americans live in a "contradictory" situation because the material base of the society, how most people earn their livelihood, is separate from their inner feelings and hopes. But this very contradiction is the basis of profound and creative energy when it is rooted in clear understandings of how the society is to change.

We live in a time when the energies growing out of resistance to contradiction are bubbling up and finding expression in so many ways that it is hardly possible to keep track of them. Probably we don't need to, although knowing about some of them is a source of mutual encouragement. Meanwhile, within the major institutions of the present, surprising changes in attitude are coming to the surface. For example, in the *Nation* for March 6, Victor Lebow gives attention to George C. Lodge's *The New American Ideology*, remarking that while it might be mistaken for "an impressively scholarly work arising out of the radical movement or the counter-culture," the author teaches business administration at the Harvard Business School—described as being to the heads of corporate enterprise "what West Point is to generals."

In this book Prof. Lodge questions whether American society can survive without breaking with its time-honored assumption that economic

ends should dominate our lives and shape our decisions. Mr. Lebow summarizes:

Absorbed from Locke and others in the 17th century, the traditional American ideology sanctified five themes of major importance in our history: (1) individualism, converted into the pluralism of special interest groups early in our development; (2) property rights and the sanctity of the contract; (3) the ideal of competition, which is still at the heart of the average American's notion of how our economic system works, and is the origin of the myth of "free enterprise"; (4) the dogma of the limited powers of the state, which permit the fullest realization of an individual's initiatives; and (5) specialization in the sciences. Lodge sees this last notion as a corruption of Newtonian mechanics, based on the assumption that if we attend to the parts as experts and specialists, the whole will take care of itself; the idea remains entrenched both in our corporations and our universities.

The conclusion is quoted in Prof. Lodge's words:

. . . we must redefine the old, seemingly basic notions on which our society has been erected—the old concepts of justice and equality, of freedom, of purpose—to fit within a communitarian mode that may some day be applied with worldwide scope. . . . It is now our task to perform the job that has been deferred for 2,000 years: to capture the energy and power of the commercial sector and graft it onto the community. The central institutions will all be changed by this integrative process, both in spirit and in letter.

The reviewer says:

Locke, Hume and Rousseau were guides to the founding fathers, but Locke preceded them all and so was truly the progenitor. What Lodge has demonstrated is how what was, for its time, an advanced and humanistic philosophy, has become corrupted into the brutish power of the corporate world—a transfiguration in which Locke has been merged into Hobbes, to put the matter in Wall Street terms.

It sometimes seems as though the best brains in the country are moving in the same general direction. In *Science* for Jan. 31, 1975, Nicholas Wade describes the work of another Washington, D.C. group, Community Technology, of which Karl Hess is the main inspiration. The members

are experimenting in ways to return energy and food production to the community—even within cities:

The group [Community Technology], according to Hess, is one of about six organizations in the world (though most of the others are rural, not urban) engaged in developing "soft" or "intermediate" technology.

There is no precise demarcation between hard and soft technology, but the distinguishing features of soft technology, as defined by Hess's group, are that it is physically contained within the community so that the people themselves not some functionary in Detroit, can determine its impact on the neighborhood. Soft technology does not place stresses on the environment, is low in its capital demands, frugal in its use of resources, and decentralizing or centrifugal in its social impact.

Except for a gift of \$2500 from a friend and a rent-free warehouse where projects like fish farms, solar heating, and rooftop gardens are developed, Community Technology is self-supporting. Its members work at jobs and finance their experiments themselves. Quotations from Hess:

A lot of foundations actively dislike what we are doing because we are saying that people can take their lives absolutely into their own hands. Foundations resent that because it seems anti-elitist. Elitists think that the great engine of progress, science and technology, can only be grasped by a very few hands. . . .

I can't believe that such bright people [as scientists and engineers] will forever misconstrue their place in society, which is to be the finest craftsmen in the neighborhood. . . .

The scientific method arose in the great challenging of ideology embodied in church and then state. It has been debased to the defense and enlargement of institutions, corporation and state. Its reconstruction would restore it as simply a method of human thought, rather than human domination.