

## THE COMPLEXITIES OF CHANGE

THE impact of the fuel shortage—whether or not it involves an element of fraud—is already being felt in numerous ways. Restrictions on fuel will obviously scuttle a number of businesses while creating some new ones. For example, solar heating has suddenly become an important factor in architectural planning, with even the Sunday supplements carrying stories on both existing installations and new designs. A great many adaptive changes may take place quickly, affecting the distribution of population, places of employment, and land-use policy, and these alterations of living patterns may open the way to still other changes not yet imagined. It seems reasonable, too, to think that the hard fact of a limited supply of petroleum will exert a restraining influence on grandiose military projects and commitments, and in time might even lead to reforms in the methods of large-scale agriculture, which are heavily dependent on various petroleum products.

Less in evidence, but nonetheless a factor in spurring adaptation to change, are numerous other shortages. No one in business today is immune, and the inability to buy critical materials may soon prove to be more than a minor irritation. Printers and publishers are up against difficulties in buying the paper they require, and there is no reason to suppose that this situation will do anything but worsen. More serious shortages are likely to become the rule. Various products essential to the paint industry are now in short supply, as for example titanium, which is the basic pigment for all good quality white paint. Actually, when shortages of materials are as common as they are today, an "explanation" of the diminished supply in a particular case has little importance; all the signs point to a rationed economy in the future, bringing an enforced reduction in the consumption of goods in a great many areas. One result may be

a turn for the better in the quality of manufactured goods. We can hope for products that will last many years longer than the merchandise produced with built-in obsolescence to assure repeat sales. The stress on fashion may also diminish along with the restoration of quality and durability.

Such changes as these, if they take place, will be responses to necessity, yet nonetheless desirable and good in their effect. Often a person is forced by sickness to change his way of life, usually his diet, with the result that, after a few months, he may discover that he is beginning to *like* doing the things that make him well. His life takes on a zest that was wholly unanticipated. Yet without the irresistible push of necessity, he would never have found this out.

Necessities, however, are of various sorts. The indications are plentiful that in the matter of fuel consumption, we won't ever have as much as we have been used to, so that while changes in our habits may be painful and tumultuous, they are bound to take place. But there are a number of other pressing conditions to which we do not respond so well. Back in 1967, J. Herbert Hollomon, then a deputy secretary in the Department of Commerce, wrote an article for the *Saturday Review* (July 1) in which he spoke of the need of designing engineers to become more aware of the broad consequences of their common professional practice. Mr. Hollomon wrote:

It is a travesty, in my view, that engineers are responsible for the design of vehicles in which so many people get killed or maimed. It is a travesty that engineers are responsible for the design of industrial plants that pollute our atmosphere and our streams. Engineers must feel a sense of moral values through which they weigh the consequences for good of their work and make some judgments between them.

There is obvious truth in this charge, but to what extent can we hold engineers responsible for making bad products which seem to sell more easily than good ones? It can be argued, of course, that advertising and marketing specialists tell the engineers what and how to design, and that these super-salesmen beguile the public into spending its money for "insolent chariots" instead of sensible cars. But what then? How do you get manufacturers to stop tempting people? It is a question whether commercial policies based on the public welfare can ever be enforced or controlled by law. The Food and Drug Administration has hardly been successful in protecting the public against the nonsense of endless drug-taking or a non-nutritious, adulterated, and sometimes poisonous diet. In fact, the Food and Drug Administration seems far more interested in persecuting vitamin manufacturers, health food dealers, unorthodox healers, and homeopathic chemists, than in ending the Madison Avenue promotion of "miracle drugs" and useless or even harmful food additives. Meanwhile, the engineers we complain of, whose employers Ralph Nader indicts so brilliantly, are only special cases of the common indifference to genuine welfare. Not just they, but the whole country, is guilty. How else can the rest of Mr. Hollomon's inventory of ills be explained?

Today you and I can buy a house, but we cannot buy an attractive city; you and I can buy a car but we cannot buy an efficient highway; you and I can pay tuition for a son to go to college but we cannot buy an educational system. The public—in the small or large—buys these public goods: school systems, cities, suburbs, road systems, air pollution control systems, airways systems. Today an increasing share of your and my money is being spent for public goods. This is because we live closer together, and have become more interacting and interdependent than we ever were before.

Little by little, we are being forced to realize that there is no longer any profit or joy in being an aggressive, proudly self-sufficient, free-enterprise people. The goodness of our lives is increasingly bound up in interdependence with the welfare of

others. You could say that the quality of practically all our surroundings and many of the services we require are now works of public enterprise. Public enterprise, simply defined, is enterprise through which people serve one another, and not just themselves. It doesn't have to be socialism, although it might be; but it does have to be consciously public spirited, with self-interest absorbed by the interest of all of us together.

Let us consider other aspects and omens of change. A great many people see in the youth revolt and the back-to-the-land movement an auspicious beginning of what may prove a new era in human affairs. The rise of the new communitarians certainly marks a radical change in taste among the coming generation. The young—or a large number of them—are turning away from the "consumerism" and wasteful ways of the parental and previous generations. They are determined to have, make, invent another way of life. They are against war, against exploitation, against acquisition as the dominant motive in life. Dozens of thoughtful writers have hailed the choices and decisions of this generation as the most encouraging sign of the times. Robert Jay Lifton spoke of their promise in *Harper's* for April, 1973, as going beyond ecological anxieties and fears about the destruction of the environment. He said:

... there is also a more positive impulse toward nature among many innovators, as exemplified by the rural commune movement. Many have ridiculed this movement and have looked upon it as nothing more than a pathetic form of pastoral romanticism, a regression to a discredited myth that is particularly misdirected in our present urban-technological society. There is no doubt that many of these communal efforts *have* been romantically envisioned and poorly planned. Moreover there is pathos and error in the claim, occasionally made, that they are *the* answer to our urban-technological dilemmas. But what is often missed in these exchanges is the psychological significance of reclaiming a relationship to nature as part of a more general psychic renewal. When young Americans create a rural commune in New Mexico or New Hampshire,

they approach nature with contemporary sensibilities. They seek to bring nature back into a meaningful cosmology, back into the human imagination. They embrace nature in an experiment with the self. The ramifications of that experiment may yet make their way felt into the most urban minds.

This is an important level of comment, having to do with the deepest motivations behind the changes that are going on, and it is not with the intention of contradicting Dr. Lifton that we recall, somewhat wryly, the report from northern California that never have the streams of that beautiful region been so polluted as they are today, by youthful campers and commune settlers seeking a more "natural" environment. And if we get down to the nuts and bolts of life on the land in New Mexico, we find that Peter van Dresser, who lives there, and who has tried for years to get a more intelligent plan of land use going in that area, is largely disenchanted by the youth settlements there, which he sees as involving only "token" contacts with nature. Today's movement, he says in a recent *Lifestyle* interview, "has been too much based on the idea of escaping to a wilderness to 'do one's own thing'." Community means having useful and helpful relations with the existing society, and it means this especially when any effort to live in a new and harmonious way will inevitably require many economic dependences on the existing society. Speaking of the new, intermediate technology developing in this country, he says:

There's a tremendous wave of interest now in solar heating and in the wind generation of electricity, which is good . . . but I still feel that the major problem is in restructuring our communities and our productive arrangements in such a way that the energy requirements are greatly reduced. Unless we do this, these new forms of non-polluting energy are not going to be able to meet our needs.

Here, again, we see the great gap between what we think we're doing and what we really *are* doing. As a simple example, you run into cases of wealthy dropouts who've jumped on the wind-power bandwagon, and have imported a very expensive wind generator from Australia. They erect these symbolically over their dome or habitat . . . but at the

same time they're running around the country in great big four-wheel-drive vehicles that burn more energy in one hour than the wind generator can produce in a week! It's a self-defeating pattern.

We must learn to live so that we don't place such heavy energy demands on the environment. If we do this, then wind generators and solar energy are beautiful . . . they *will* help. All I'm warning against is this old American notion that somewhere there's some wonderful gadget that'll solve all our problems for us.

Interestingly, Loren Eiseley made some similar or related comments back in 1970, in an interview with an editor of *Psychology Today* (October). Asked about how he felt toward the ecological movement, he said:

I am all for the consciousness of what we have to face. The only thing I fear is that it might be a passing fad. It is easy, you know, to carry banners and hold a few teach-ins, but the problem of reworking a whole conception of American life is formidable. And for a couple of centuries now we have been ravagers of a continent. I have seen students who are perfectly willing to protest pollution but who don't change by one iota their personal habits of wasteful disposal and littering. It is more fun to attack a particular industry that you don't like than to remake one's own personal habits which are a part of this whole complex. This, I think, is going to be the hardest task and it will demand long educational effort. And it won't be done next year or in the next ten years.

Speaking of students, Eiseley said:

Unhappily many students, instead of preparing themselves to assume the roles of their professors, are dreaming of a totally changed world and in a meaningless fashion cry "Stop it all!" without any logical effort to say what they are going to substitute. Whenever young people talk thoughtlessly to me about violent revolution, I cannot help asking: don't you know the old phrase, "the revolution devours its children"? It strikes me as strange that this kind of pure nihilistic behavior would emanate particularly from students in educational institutions. The truly educated above all should be able to grasp the necessity of cultural continuity in our social institutions. Yet young radicals talk glibly of a revolution they cannot logically define except in terms of a "grinding halt" or "all power to the people." This vast catch phrase is meaningless

without definition and in the hands of demagogues it simply spells blood. . . .

There is this total emphasis on the future. I am not necessarily opposed to the future but I think Americans have a tendency to regard the future as something picked up on the street. That is, the future is something you suddenly come upon as though it had no relation to the past. The future, of course is simply created out of our own substance. It is our way of doing things, and this is both a wonderful and a terrifying thing about man. Having the power to manipulate abstract thought and to deal with intangibles, man draws the future out of himself. Therefore he had better be careful what kind of future he is looking for. Because it is not to be encountered by accident. Instead it is woven into man's interior nature, its ambivalence, its good and evil, contend within us before the visible act that is first future and then unchangeable history ever emerges.

For a capsule version of some of the things Dr. Eiseley said in this interview, we might recall Paul Goodman's brief remarks nearly seven years ago in the *New York Review of Books* (April 10, 1967):

The young are quick to point out the mess: we have made but I don't see that they really care about that. Rather, I see them with the Christmas astronauts flying toward the moon and seeing the earth shining below: it is as if they are about to abandon an old house and therefore it makes no difference if they litter it with beer cans. These are bad thoughts.

It was Paul Goodman, we might also remember, who pointed out to the coming generation that a reformed technology will play a crucial part in any improved society of the future, and that trained engineers will be needed to carry out this work. If the good people don't know how, it won't get done right, he said. The same thing might be repeated after Peter van Dresser, in other terms, since he emphasizes that specialized intelligence and training will be necessary for the economic formations of the future, since the whole population will still have to be fed, and even comparatively small agricultural units will have to have a commercial role to produce food on a community and regional scale. Activities of this sort, he insists, *are* necessary, and "the fantasy

that you're being self-sufficient when you're not actually gets in the way of a real, alternative economy."

Meanwhile, there are the practical problems of the individual who is determined to be a craftsman and make things with his hands, instead of some kind of wage-slave. Actually, wherever you turn, there are: contradictions and problems. We recall the Liberty Outlets started by the Poor People's Corporation in northern cities, to sell the products of the Mississippi co-ops started up by Black leather and needle workers who had learned these trades as a means of self-support after being driven from jobs or the land as punishment for supporting the civil rights movement. Many of their products sold well in the fashionable Bleecker Street store in New York City, but what about the Black people up in Harlem, whom the co-op craftsmen much preferred to have for customers? Well, the fact was that the Harlem people couldn't afford to buy hand-made articles, so that the merchandise produced by the co-ops had to be sold to the smart Bohemian trade in New York—the people with good jobs who had the money! The last we heard, the Liberty Outlet people were planning to try having two stores—one for the rich trade, the other for their brothers and sisters in Harlem.

The same kind of situation was described by James Van Buren Hearne in his article in *MANAS* for Feb. 3, 1971. Writing as someone knowledgeable in both production and sales, Hearne addressed would-be craftsmen:

If you try to make your living at craftsmanship today, you may find yourself catering willy-nilly to the luxury trade. . . . your production must be thoroughly professional. You must study the market carefully. You must learn to deal with hardbitten and skeptical owners of quality shops and mail-order houses. . . . Keep quiet about the fact that you are trying to short-circuit some of the most vital aspects of the Bourgeois Economy. You are making an honest product for people who have the money to buy it. This is the way a craftsman makes his living. . . . The secret of success as a craftsman is to reclaim for yourself as a worker some of the functions which the

Middle Class took away in order to enhance its stranglehold on the worker. While you thus undermine the Bourgeoisie, remember that they are also your customers. They have money and many of them have enough taste to know and want a good thing when they see it. To whom can you sell a fine hand-made leather billfold for forty dollars?

Hearne thinks craftsmen ought to read Eric Gill and Juenger's *The Failure of Technology*, to enlarge the philosophy behind what a craftsman does. There is even the possibility, which he does not mention, that some of the more innocent of bourgeois traits, such as pleasure in a tidy home, joy in a wife and children—or a husband and offspring—may creep into one's life as a matter of course. Meanwhile, people like Schumacher and others are working hard to change larger aspects of the socio-economic picture, and various forms of grim necessity may keep on emerging to nudge people in the right direction.

What we have tried to talk about here, in a brief and sketchy fashion, is the nuts and bolts of change' and the kinds of interchange, cooperation, and tolerance that will have to be practiced along with the resistance, intransigence, and opting out that seem to get most of the publicity regarding the break with the past that is going on. But one can never really break with the past without maintaining connection with what is human, useful, and constructive in the past—and there must have been a lot that was good or we wouldn't be here at all. Not to be neglected, either, is the grasp of large social problems now shown by writers about world food supply, concerned with changes in food production on a massive scale, and the indisputable interdependence of all the peoples of the world. The totality of change, of which we usually think in very general terms, is really a vast tapestry of continuous, interrelated, living processes, and while seeing it whole as well as in the details of one's own, small, personal relationships is admittedly difficult, this, too, is necessary if the wide gaps between community vision and human world need are ever to be closed.

## *REVIEW*

### ON DOCTORS AND HEALTH

A FEW weeks ago, the local listener-supported radio station in this area, KPFK, presented a Pacifica-produced program on childbirth "technology" in the United States. While the mechanistic atmosphere of modern hospital wards received ample criticism, the program focused on the effects of drugs given to women about to give birth to a child. We happened to hear two tapes included in this program—one a recital by a mother of what she went through as a result of a dose of scopolamine (nightmarish hysteria), the other the experience of a woman who had been given a drug to induce or hasten labor, apparently to suit the doctor's convenience. The point of the program was that, in addition to the psychological violence connected with the use of these drugs, there was increase in the possibility of brain damage to the infant. It is doubtless possible to arrange to hear these tapes, one way or another, and we strongly recommend this sort of self-education, especially for anyone contemplating parenthood. (Interested persons should contact KPFA, the Pacifica station in the San Francisco area, KPFK in Southern California, and WBAI in New York, where the program was originated by Nanette Rainone.)

Here we are especially interested in an aside which came toward the end of the program. Someone asked whether the Europeans practiced the same sort of chemical control of women's bodies and psyches in the delivery room, and the answer was an emphatic *No!* In Europe both doctors and mothers are scornful of such methods—in most cases, it was said, preferring more natural means. Which leads to the question, Why?

What is it about Americans—just people, as well as the professionals—that makes them so easily persuaded of the magic of chemistry and technology? Why are they so much more impressed by the latest gadget, the newest theory,

the most startling "discovery," to the exclusion of plain and simple ways of doing things? Is it that we are peculiarly vulnerable to the defects of our virtues? We are certainly very good at developing novel devices—just look at the modern kitchen, where most of the creativity of household technology is displayed—and it seems a commonplace American assumption that any way of doing things that didn't originate in the last couple of years is probably tiresomely old-fashioned, backward, and unenlightened. So maybe we can blame it all on Madison Avenue.

But this might be unduly hard on the advertising fraternity, which only does what comes naturally. After all, in his pamphlet, *Medicine*, published by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Herbert Ratner, professor of preventive medicine at Loyola, remarked that this sort of tendency was noticeable at the very beginnings of American medicine. Benjamin Rush, the first Surgeon General of the United States (in Washington's time), was known to fuss with and over-treat people, when he might better have let nature take its course. Dr. Ratner believes that the "activist" habit in American medicine, so long established, has numerous consequences. He speaks of two paradoxes in our medical practice:

One is that though the United States is the best place in the world to have a serious illness (because with our technical talents we have developed a high level of competency in handling complicated, serious illnesses), it is one of the worst countries in the world in which to have a non-serious illness.

Asked why this should be, he said:

Because as actionists, who feel more comfortable doing something and having something done to us, we impose our life-saving drugs and techniques, intended for serious ailments, on minor, even trivial illnesses—illnesses that are self-limiting and that, except for occasional symptomatic relief, do better without interference from the physician. It is generally recognized that America is the most over-medicated, most over-operated, and most over-inoculated country in the world. It is also the most anxiety-ridden country with regard to health.

have been reading lately—*Food Is Your Best* (Random House, 1965), by Henry G. Bieler, fortunately in print in both hardback and

food and diet, many of them "good," or regarded as both good and fashionable, but this book seems

about diet, and how to avoid being trapped by the succession of fads and manias concerning food

publish in this field.

What does Dr. medication" and its effects? This subject comes up early, where the author is telling how he cured

couldn't seem to recover from a complex of debilitating afflictions. He got started on diet

eminent nutritionist reported in the *Los Angeles*

And then:

I overheard whispers: " He's going crazy." And a year or so later when, after much research, I stopped using medicines

results through the chemistry of food and the chemistry of the glands—a more lasting effect and

shook their collective heads in wonder.

They consider me a renegade from established

expected me to jump back on their bandwagon if I wanted to cure patients. Really, there is no special

*chronic* disease. Even the miracle drugs, shamefully

*For the truth* that 80 to 85 per cent of all types of human

and the individual recovers.

Bieler became convinced that a wrong use of

Americans, remarking that the medical journals, with "commendable honesty," are now using the

*iatrogenic* (physician-caused) He

speaks, for example, of "the reactions, from mild

penicillin," and continues:

For the relief or cure of these reactions

we have the classical example of one devil chasing out another! It is frightening to consider how much

irritants in the unsuspecting human body. Such a thought is followed by another: all drugs which are

as good effects. Isn't it sensible, therefore, to restrict their use as much as possible? One area in which

strongly urged is the ordinary head cold. *Penicillin*

Yet untold millions of adults and children have been

from a cold. The body then has two enemies to expel: the cold and the toxic drug. If this were the only evil

harmful. There is, in addition, the menace of adverse drug reaction, way beyond what meets the physician's

system. There may be damage which does not show up until years later. And finally, saddest of all, are

*many deaths every year* directly due to sensitivity

in the course of a lifetime one person in every ten in this country may, because of contact with foods and

sensitized to it and not ever be able to use it again. The loss of the usefulness of penicillin would be a

powerful drug out of circulation when it comes to treating such simple conditions as the common cold?

the currently held misinformation that antibiotics are cure-alls? And this goes too for the prevalent fad of

pills could rejuvenate mankind. *Instead, they line the*

While most of this book is positive information and instruction about intelligent diet

Dr. Bieler's arguments is necessary to clear the air

uselessness of pouring cod liver oil down the throats of countless unwilling children, and a

validity in the form they are accepted:

Personal observations have led many food faddists to conclude that certain food combinations are dangerous. For example, it is commonly said that starch and protein is a bad combination. What these faddists miss seeing is that starch and protein and *toxic bile* is a bad combination. As most diet books are based on personal idiosyncrasies and prejudices, the usual result is an amazing collection of good and bad combinations. Nature, in her wisdom, has never created a food which is entirely protein, starch or sugar. Even meat contains relatively large amounts of starch (as glycogen and muscle sugar).

Dr. Bieler wages an all-out war with those who remain indifferent to the part played by toxemia, or general poisoning, in the production of ill-health. He points out that a number of persisting diseases—arthritis, neuritis, peritonitis, pericarditis, encephalitis, meningitis, bursitis, and iritis "*are all inflammations and are due to a forced elimination of toxins.*" They are, in short, the desperate remedies to which the body is driven by the poisons it has been obliged to cope with. "I have found," Bieler says, "that the only method of curing or alleviating them is to neutralize the toxins by diet in order to relieve the congested and disturbed liver by rest (rest, that is, from improper food) and to facilitate elimination of poisons through the *natural* channels chosen by nature for that kind of work, such as the kidneys, liver, lungs, skin and bowels."

Summarizing his outlook, Dr. Bieler says that in 1950 some twenty-eight million Americans were judged by a federal commission to be suffering from chronic disease. And since the number of persons suffering from chronic disease increases far faster than the population, the total number of sufferers is today enormous. Medical science is acutely aware of these menacing statistics.

I chose to believe, after many years of patient research, that when the strain of faulty living habits, reliance on stimulating drugs, incorrect diet and poor environment have broken down the filters of the body, a toxemia naturally develops which results in what is commonly known as disease. The basic cause of disease, therefore, is the toxemia. The name of the disease describes the damage done by the toxemia.

This belief goes back to ancient days, and it is opposed to the attempt to overcome disease by either powerful and dangerous drugs or risky surgery. The treatment of toxemia, such as I have discussed with you in these pages, is extremely simple: it is not dramatic; it does not cure over-night. But *cure* it will if the patient cooperates with both nature and with his physician.

From a reading of this book it becomes evident that doctors like Dr. Bieler can help only one sort of patient—the one that is willing to bear the burden of curing himself, with the doctor's help. They are people who have an inherent tendency to look after themselves, and certain other qualities. Bieler says:

Over the years I have found that a patient must have a sort of mission in life—something very important that he hopes to accomplish to the best of his ability—before he is really motivated to seek a cure. I can only stress the fact that he must cure himself; I cannot do any more than *help* the process along and try to help him adjust to his particular type of food. But the cure comes from within, and in the end it is Nature that does it.

Doctoring such as Bieler does seems a reasonable and necessary kind of specialty. As a specialty, it, too, is self-limiting. For it cannot succeed unless it increases instead of decreasing the competence and self-reliance of the individual—and the test is plain enough: *Did you get well?* A rule of this sort might be one to apply to every sort of specialty, as a way of finding out whether we need it or not. Are we increased as intelligent and self-reliant individuals, or are we cut off from the natural resources of life by this, that, or the other expertise or specialized practice?

We can hardly say enough in praise of this book.



## **COMMENTARY**

### **A CLARIFYING PARALLEL**

OUR lead article speaks of the sort of abuses that are rooted in long established personal habits and attitudes, noting that these tendencies are much more difficult to overcome than those which come up against an absolute requirement of change, such as the fuel shortage presents. In other words, the difficulties which can be remedied only by means of a general self-reform are not willingly recognized by a great many people, and for this reason are largely unaffected by ordinary methods of introducing change, while educational methods secure results only little by little, at a discouragingly slow rate. Herbert Hollomon lists a number of such problems, and it is interesting to find Dr. Bieler, in a portion of his book not noticed in Review, describing parallel obstacles to individual health:

Isn't it strange that a person will keep in his mind such relatively useless information as the last World Series scores, the lines of some minor poem memorized in grammar school, the Academy Award winners of the past five years—and be more or less ignorant of the way his body works and why he is tormented with pain, disease and breakdown of body organs? Does he ever think as he sees the light flashing on a firefly's tail that he is observing amazing chemical processes far more intricate than manmade experiments in an atomic laboratory?

You may pride yourself on understanding the mysteries of inertial navigation or lunar travel, but can you locate your liver? Generally not, that is, if your liver is silently going on about its amazingly complex tasks. But when it is *ailing*, you crave knowledge. As Dr. Ian Stevenson wisely observed, "If a man will not study himself when well, he must, when ill."

Ordinarily, only his outer body's surface is known to him. His intricate functional activities are felt only as a vague sense of well-being, until he is aware of that signal of distress, pain. He gets a splinter in his finger and promptly forgets it. Later he surveys the swollen, inflamed tissue around it with annoyance. "Why does this have to happen to me today, when I'm so busy?" he asks in anger. He does not realize his body is forever fighting a biological

battle for his survival; the swelling and inflammation (boil or abscess) is a wise response of the body, for they constitute a complete quarantine, a thick barricade of inflammatory tissue to prevent the enemy (microbes or poisons) from spreading further throughout the body.

If it were possible to interpret social phenomena and ills with the same simple clarity, our problems of reform would be much reduced.

## CHILDREN

### . . . and Ourselves

#### LETTER FROM A FRIEND

A FEW thoughts: Your mention of two college graduates visiting the MANAS office, in the Dec. 12 issue, really hit the mark with me, and I am sure would have with others, had they read the article. I graduated last spring from a private liberal arts college with an Independent major, which in my case meant learning about anything that appeared to be worthwhile. (The Registrar wanted me to pattern my program toward a "goal," which in her language meant a job in the fall.) Hoping not to sound corny, I might say that I was interested in and concerned about anything that contributes to furthering my understanding of myself, the world, and my relationships in all their myriad forms, i.e., the human condition. Therefore, I found myself studying literature, philosophy, religion, history, art, and a scattering of just about all the other disciplines (astronomy proved surprisingly valuable). However, while these were good interests to pursue, I have to admit that I finished college out of an obligation to my parents. (True, there is always the chance that my degree will "come in handy," but that is hardly a justification for all that time, money, energy, and all the other things connected with the college experience, such as having the administration and department heads tell you what courses will be offered.) My parents didn't force me to stay in school, but I felt, in a hard-to-describe way, that after all they had given me, all the money they had spent for my first two and a half years of college, and everything I had learned and become through their assistance (my dad *has* instilled some lasting values in me, values I can *use* in making my life)—all this led me to the conclusion that I would stick it out for the old folks; after all, I wouldn't be going in debt, and there were courses which interested me along with a few good instructors. But since I have been out of school—there's no question about it—my learning is truer, more in accord with my needs. I've gone into some depth in explaining this because my situation isn't unusual, so far as I can tell, and I thought that the motives guiding some students in college these days, explained first hand, might interest you.

I don't know. Maybe you are in pretty good touch with people in my age group (I'm twenty-two). I think my case isn't unusual—not unusual for students who aren't too pleased with existing conditions in the world; but it may be unusual for a still large number of students who either think of college as a boring but necessary step toward that good job, or as a four-year playhouse with fun and games. I don't think I'm exaggerating or being arrogant in stating this. I attended three schools and have talked to students from schools everywhere in the country. But, there is also no question about the fact that the situation is improving. More people in colleges are attending because *they* want to. Your remark in the Oct. 31 issue, that "if children and adults had a non-compulsive relation to schools, that would probably, of itself, make them much better places," is so true. And that is the attitude that is gaining more and more importance with students and potential students.

To get back one last time to the post-college or autodidact situation, I'd like to mention a few other currents presently being felt. I and the people I communicate with feel we have developed an awareness of what is basically wrong with the behavior of society. We have our differences, but we all agree that it is a moral crisis, that many people have misplaced values, that education in its traditional form usually ends up stunting the growth of a child, that war is not good, that there are poisons in our food, and so on. We don't, now, as many of us did three or four years ago, suffer from a sense of powerlessness or utter despair in regard to making this a better world to live in. Partly this is because of the changes that have come about in society-at-large, but mostly because of our journeys into ourselves. The idea (truth) that real changes come through individual change is making increasing sense to a growing number of people. Hence the interest in Thoreau, Emerson, Blake, and Thomas Merton, to name just a few who loom large in our imagination, because of what they did with their own lives.

What I started out to say before is that though we don't have a sense of powerlessness, many of us do have problems in "implementing" (if I may be allowed one cliché) our ideas. It has much to do with what you refer to often—that the only true value of knowledge, if it is knowledge, lies in its use, *in action*, whatever form that may take. We often sit around throwing out ideas,

hashing out possibilities, and working out a structure for our visions, and then the ball stops.

We are doing some things here: operating a food store, preparing various literary pieces, expressing our views at school board meetings, moving to the country, and general actions of this nature. Maybe we are simply too anxious. Or perhaps each of us must take it upon himself to send out letters, check into the Ralph Nader type organizations, inquire into projects such as the New Alchemy Institute (which I might end up doing if I find myself in Santa Barbara in January—I have a girl-friend in school there), and various helpful publications. I mention these activities because some people I know feel they could work out their dreams (of themselves and the external world) in a more complete manner in activities like these. I myself am presently grappling with this dilemma: Should I do more reading, contemplating, piano playing (I guess I'd fall into the category of a serious amateur pianist playing music for its own sake), or should I get going, putting myself into some useful work, or at least trying a kind of work I think I would enjoy, allowing my real interests to surface?

This brings to mind Paul Goodman's admirable proposals offered in the Education of the Young section of his *New Reformation*. In it he told of Goethe's advice to a young man not to jump suddenly into something he longs to do, which is almost sure to prove deceptive, but to do what he feels comfortable and competent in doing. Then, as openings appear and opportunities arise, grab on to them, feel your way along, and slowly what you truly want to do will reveal itself, infusing your actions with self-directed energy.

I guess what it all comes down to is just what you stated in your remarks on the two visitors to the MANAS office. Individual invention is the only real resource; the only way we are going to see the sunshine through all the clouds of confusion is by reliance on ourselves, through introspection, dreams, experimentation, and eventual action, firmly rooted in moral values. One of these days I'm going to get around to ordering some of Arthur Morgan's books. He says many things which are extremely valuable and exhibits feelings which I share, but there is one attitude which has had a greater impact on me than any other, and that is his view of *responsibility*. His statement in the *MANAS Reader*, "The issue I would live by is this:

Will the continuity of life have more value because I have lived?", rings oh so true for me, and I am sure for many other people I know. It is something like Buckminster Fuller's decision, made while standing on the shore of Lake Michigan in the early thirties, to go on creating his life, not to commit suicide, because he owed it to the universe. I only wish he hadn't become so absorbed in technological gadgets and supposed solutions.

Well, I think I've said enough. I thought you might enjoy and find some value in hearing from this part of the country, my views being shared, I believe, in the main, by many other people in this area, especially an increasing number of people who are abandoning the college experience, at least for the time being. . . .

It's stirring to read letters by John Holt in MANAS. My sister says she gets the feeling she's looking into a whole subculture, what with Maslow, Henry Miller, Theodore Roszak, Frederick Franck, Robert Hutchins, and many others contributing—and let's hope MANAS catches on at the food store.

Minneapolis, Minn.

A READER

## *FRONTIERS*

### We Had Reason To Know Better

IN an article in *ETC.* for last December, William R. Catton shows that we have never lacked intelligent anticipation of the danger of exhausting the natural resources of the earth. Addressing a conference of conservationists in 1908, Theodore Roosevelt said that "the time has come to inquire seriously what will happen when our forests are gone, when the coal, the iron, the oil, and the gas are exhausted, when the soil has been further impoverished and washed into the streams, polluting the rivers, denuding the fields." Then, in 1929, the Lynds described in *Middletown* how even then a once charming river with wooded shores had shrunk "to a creek discolored by industrial chemicals and malodorous with the city's sewage." And William Vogt said in 1948, in his *Road to Survival*:

Our most prodigal waste is, perhaps, of gasoline. We are an importing nation; and every day we waste hundreds of thousands of gallons. All manner of drivers let their motors run when they are not in use. Our tensions find outlets in racing motors and in traveling at high speeds that reduce the efficiency of our cars. We build into our automobiles more power and greater gas consumption than we need. We use the press and the radio to push the sales of more cars. We drive them hundreds of millions of miles a year in pursuit of futility. With the exhaustion of our own oil wells in sight, we send our navy into the Mediterranean, show our teeth to the U.S.S.R., insist on access to Asiatic oil—and continue to throw it away at home.

The right cautions and counsels have always been available. The problem is learning to heed them. Just last month, in the Jan. 12 issue of *Saturday Review World*, Norman Cousins examined the meaning of the energy crisis, asking a number of questions:

Why does the government maintain three mammoth air forces? In addition to the U.S. Air Force, both the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy maintain their own air establishments. Congressional committees have called attention time and again to the prodigious waste and expense involved in

duplicate military operations. . . . How many millions of gallons of oil are consumed each year for military purposes that have nothing to do with the essentials of American security? . . . How many jet planes are now being used to ferry government officials or military officers over routes now served by commercial world airlines?

Mr. Cousins multiplies examples of such extravagance, then continues with other questions:

. . . why hasn't the U.S. government proposed a multinational cooperative-research project in the solar energy field the results to be used for the benefit of the entire human community? Apart from world peace, nothing could have a greater bearing on the human future. Solar energy is not a wild scheme but a feasible and practicable new energy source.

One may be grateful to Mr. Cousins for thinking of these questions, but when will we get around to asking why we *expect* governments to be responsible in this way? When have they ever been so, except, in rare instances, during the regimes of benevolent absolute monarchs, or under popular pressure so urgent as to make the policies adopted simple reflections of the demands of the people? On what grounds can we hope "government" will be so much better than all the people whose habits were so well described by William Vogt in 1948?

It is easy enough to draw up indictments of governments and to show their collaboration with commercial interests. This is being done very effectively every day by investigative reporters. But in most cases the disclosures are used as weapons in the struggle for political power, as if a change in office-holders could alter the everyday habits of mind of both leaders and led.

The encouraging things now happening in the world seem always to be the result of individual resolve and independent human response to need. For example, there is this account in the same issue of *SRW* of the behavior of the 450,000 Arabs inside Israel during the recent conflict:

Despite conditions of total blackout, not a single case of sabotage or fifth-column activity by Israeli Arabs took place. Israeli Arabs responded

spontaneously to requests for blood donations for the wounded of both sides in Israeli hospitals. There were also less dramatic but equally important displays of the power of human sympathy over enmity. On the Nazareth-Haifa Road, Arab and Jewish women collaborated on an open-air buffet, offering passing Israeli soldiers free cold drinks, fruit, sandwiches—donated by local people, most of them Arabs—as well as free phone calls home.

The claim that great power, such as only governments possess, is needed to cope with emergencies of the dimensions both nations and all the world are now facing has plausibility, but depending on what such power can do may lead, not to real remedies, but to a multiplication of ills. Consider, for example, the much discussed BART of San Francisco, which was critically examined by Stephen Zwerling in *Environment* for last December. BART is short for Bay Area Rapid Transit District, around San Francisco, highly praised for a while as a system of public transportation that would diminish the excessive use of automobiles. After noting that BART was a scheme devised by experts in transportation, and that it was widely believed that the technical decisions of such persons would not be influenced by "politics," Zwerling said:

I contend that BART is an example of technology used to "legislate" the future. Whereas the Bay Area's rapid transit planners may have imagined themselves to be predicting the development of a regional community that would be served by BART, BART appears likely to be a major force in creating the urban patterns the planners of twenty years ago thought they were predicting. Because this means forcing the future to fit a particular pattern, the decision to build BART represents a pre-emption of the public interest.

What is the "pattern" here referred to? BART, says a summary of the contentions of this article, "once praised by environmentalists, is leading to construction of high-rise buildings, further congestion; downtown prosperity seems to have been BART's purpose from the outset."

Actually, observations of this general sort have been made for years. In 1962 Scott Greer wrote in *The Emerging City*:

In the absence of a single polity for the metropolis, growth is uncoordinated and unplanned, with the transport system tending to follow, willy-nilly, the development of areas controlled by tiny metropolises or not controlled at all, while improved roads precipitate further building and settling. . . . The city of the future loses freedom of choice and becomes a captive of the unplanned commitments of today.

Quite evidently, neither free enterprise nor large-scale social planning by technologists can bring remedies for attitudes which have already given disorder-producing momentum to the living habits and wants of so many people. Not just planning and management, but new conceptions of goals and attitudes toward community and human association will be required.