

AN UNTIDY SOLUTION

FIFTY, forty, or even twenty-five years ago, for many people, what is now spoken of as the "state of the world" was not a major concern. Life in the United States was complicated enough, without worrying about what was going on in other faraway lands, such as, for example, the six or seven nations of the sub-Saharan Sahel, or in the island regions of the Pacific. But today, we are told, we *must* give attention to distant happenings. The newspapers seem filled with events in countries we have never heard of, where political revolutions are now held to be momentous for our peace of mind. We have indeed one earth, but One World is a condition far from being achieved. Our armed forces are directed by the President to quiet the life and adjust the politics of a small Caribbean island named Grenada, and suddenly we are made aware that our homeland is under threat from a small republic in Central America. Communist perversion, it is said, is brewing there, when all we knew was that a revolution in the making for more than fifty years had finally thrown off the rule of a conscienceless dictator.

But, starting in 1983, a wide and more important perspective was brought to our attention by the research efforts of the Worldwatch Institute. This small group of investigators in Washington, D.C., in that year began publishing an annual report called *State of the World*, in which, year by year, the planet was given a physical exam and marks assigned for its condition. In the latest of these reports, *State of the World* 1988, it is said in summary:

The readings are not reassuring: The earth's forests are shrinking, its deserts are expanding, and its soils are eroding—all at record rates. The ozone layer is being depleted. The very temperature of the earth appears to be rising, posing a threat of unknown dimensions to virtually all of the life-support systems on which humanity depends.

What on earth is the ozone layer? Our old *Britannica* (1953) tells us nothing about it, but we discover that it isn't on the earth at all but high in our atmosphere, where it protects us from radiations which would be very bad for our health if they came through in any large quantity. In the first chapter of the 1988 report on the state of the world, Lester R. Brown and Christopher Flavin say:

Four years ago the so-called greenhouse effect expected to result from rising atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO₂) was a widely accepted hypothesis, but an actual warming seemed remote. Since then new evidence indicates that the long-projected warming of the earth is already under way. And in the last few years, scientists have concluded that emissions of several other gases—including chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), nitrous oxide, and methane—are contributing to the warming.

The depletion of the ozone layer due to CFC production was also seen as a remote threat just four years ago, one not expected to materialize until sometime well into the next century, if ever. Since then puzzling new findings have lent urgency to this issue. A dramatic depletion of ozone occurs over Antarctica each September, scientists have discovered, and each year since 1979 it has grown. By 1987 what has become known as the ozone "hole" was twice the size of the continental United States. Though the hole involves a series of as yet poorly understood chemical reactions, it could portend an unexpectedly rapid ozone depletion globally and translate into lowered crop output and rising skin cancer and eye damage as more ultraviolet radiation reaches the earth. . . . Heavy dependence on fossil fuels has caused a buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that threatens to warm the earth. . . .

In addition, scientists now believe that gases such as methane and chlorofluorocarbons may double the warming effect caused by carbon dioxide buildup alone. If current energy trends continue the temperature may rise by as much as 4.5 degrees Celsius (8.1 degrees Fahrenheit) by the middle of the next century, causing unpredictable but potentially catastrophic shifts in the earth's climate.

In their account of the effects of warming the writers say:

Some consequences of a global warming, such as agricultural changes, have already received considerable attention. But others, such as the effect on patterns of hydroelectric generation, water supply systems, and settlement patterns, are more difficult to anticipate. . . . Meteorological models, though they remain sketchy, suggest that two of the world's major food-producing regions—the North American heartland and the grain-growing regions of the Soviet Union are likely to experience a decline in soil moisture during the summer growing season as a result of increased evaporation.

If so, land in the western U.S. Great Plains that now produces wheat would revert to grassland. The western U.S. cornbelt would become semiarid, with wheat or other drought-tolerant grains that yield 40 bushels per acre replacing corn that yields 100 bushels.

In their concluding section the writers say:

Climate change is a Tragedy of the Commons writ large. Although industrial countries are responsible for a disproportionate share of the problem, carbon emissions are increasing worldwide, most rapidly in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Unless all act together, there is little reason to act separately. . . . Not since the depression decade of the thirties and the war decade of the forties have so many dark clouds gathered on the horizon. Perhaps this new generation of challenges will spawn its own set of new attitudes and new cooperative initiatives.

While the language of these writers is mild, their feeling is urgent. Year by year the authors of these reports have grown more serious in their warnings, more concerned in their anticipations. Lester Brown and Edward Wolf, who in the last chapter write on "Reclaiming the Future," begin:

Putting the world on a sustainable development path will not be easy, given the environmental degradation and economic confusion that now prevail. Modest increases in energy efficiency investment to family planning budgets will not suffice. Getting on such a path depends on a wholesale reordering of priorities, a fundamental restructuring of the global economy, and a quantum leap in international cooperation. . . . Unless the desire to ensure a sustainable future becomes a central concern of national governments, the continuing

deterioration of the economy's natural support systems will eventually overwhelm efforts to improve the human condition.

A sustainable future requires that a series of interlocking issues be dealt with simultaneously. Stabilizing population will prove difficult until poverty is reduced. It may be impossible to avoid a mass extinction of species as long as the Third World is burdened with debt. Perhaps most important, the resources needed to arrest the physical deterioration of the planet may not be available unless the international arms race can be reversed.

This will serve very well as a statement of the problem and what should be done about it. But why has the problem reached what may fairly be called an emergency stage without any real attention to what was happening? The answer to this question is that we have all, both governments and people, been wholly involved in a short-term pragmatic approach in everything we have undertaken. Now we can say, "Well, we didn't see, we couldn't anticipate what would happen." The ugly way to describe this state of mind is to call it "selfish." A fairer way might be to say that, being engrossed in personal problems and personal objectives, and not having the habit of being concerned about the welfare of others, we created patterns of behavior which shut out any awareness of what was happening in the rest of the world. When oil came along, replacing coal, there was some instant prosperity which lasted for a while. We had a lot of money and the banks had a lot of money. And we and the banks told the people of the Third World that if they wanted a better life they should copy us, do what we did, and borrow from us to get started. Well, they wanted the kind of life we had—or that they thought we had—so they borrowed the money we offered, a lot of it, too much of it. Then the price of oil went up and up, and the Third world countries couldn't pay off their loans, could hardly manage to pay the interest on them. And the banks just said, "Well, tighten your belts and pay us back." They didn't say, "We made an awful mistake and now we'll have to work things out together, so your people don't go hungry." And

the people at home didn't complain because if the banks don't get paid, *they* will go broke, and we'll all be in trouble. Perceptive observers have pointed out that the banks will probably figure out a way to get their money from the taxpayers at home, without really explaining what the arrangement really amounts to. But the collapse may come before they can do that, and maybe it should.

What is needed is a principled way of behavior instead of the pragmatic short-term approach. We need to begin figuring out what is right to do, and then do it, no matter what, instead of deciding what we think will work and then doing that. We need to consult the great teachers of ethics, the Buddhas, the Christs, the Platos, and other philosophers instead of simply trying to decide how to get rich as soon as possible, since that, putting it briefly, is what is wrong with the world.

Is there any way we can take the moral sting out of considering this program? Yes, there is. We could call it the design solution of our problems instead of preaching the moral solution. Who has the design solution? Read E.F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful* for one man's design solution. Don't go in for big enterprise because big enterprise will tie your hands and force you to do stupid things which, in the long run, turn out to be incredibly immoral. That is the meaning of immoral society contrasted with moral man. Then, read the works of the bioregionalists. They talk about understanding nature and getting along with its rules. This isn't moralizing but the repetition of common sense, some of it simple, some of it complex. People who really understand nature turn out to have very good minds. They are worth listening to. What they say is the practical side of morality.

But people are likely to argue, "It will take too long to develop a bioregional culture. Our problem needs a quick solution." But then you have to reply, "There isn't any quick solution." And that is true. We have been hundreds of years

of building our problem to its present insoluble mess; it may not take that long to correct it, but it will certainly take quite a while. The lubrication that will be necessary while we are working things out is the cooperative spirit, which is all we have to heal the sores, bind up the mutilations, of our existing system. Sometimes people call it love, but this word has so many misuses that cooperation seems a better term.

One thing that an effort of this sort will accomplish is that it will get together people of like mind. Right now we have in charge those who are utterly convinced that the acquisitive way of life is the only path of progress. It may be, for a time, progress for them, but in the long run it will mean disaster for everybody. So we need an arrangement in which those people are not in charge. The bioregional community is such an arrangement. Getting it going will be vastly educational about the differences among human beings. There are two kinds of differences. One is in practical intelligence, in how to get things done, regardless of the consequences. Some people are smarter than others in this way—the people, for example, who work out the way to make nuclear weapons. They are no doubt very smart, and they are also very destructive. The other difference is in moral insight and capacity. There are those who naturally think in terms of the good of other people, of society at large, as contrasted with those so wrapped up in their own interests that they give no attention to the needs of the human community. The project is to discover those individuals who have both moral insight and all the practical intelligence needed for what they see needs to be done, and having located them, to put them in charge. Obviously, this requires general education of the people so that they will have sense enough to put the right people in charge. Again, obviously, we haven't had enough of that sort of education, and it will take a long time to spread it around. That's why—one reason why—it will take a long time to get a bioregional community going. But it is the only thing to do.

Another reason it will take time is that making a real community means a lot of habit formation. It means that people will think about the needs of their children before they think much about other objectives; and they will think about the welfare of the community, of the natural and wild community, along with the human beings involved. They will be drawn to read Thoreau, to read Aldo Leopold, along with Plato and maybe Plotinus. They will do a new kind of publishing, printing only material that will be valuable to future generations. But you're talking about Utopia, someone will say. All right. Why not? Little by little, if we are to get anywhere, we need to think and talk about the utopias we are able to put into practice.

While earlier in this discussion we quoted at some length from *State of the World 1988*, the passages presented were from the first and last chapters, with a variety of other material equally deserving of attention in the other sections of the book. The chapter on "Shifting to Renewable Energy" is of great importance, in which Cynthia Pollack Shea tells about new ways of drawing on water power, capturing solar energy directly, and using the wind. Unfortunately, the fall in the price of oil slowed down these developments, but when it rises again, as it inevitably will, further progress in photovoltaic cells, which produce electricity from sunlight, will take place.

Then there is a critical analysis of President Reagan's "Star Wars" project by William U. Chandler which points out that "the Reagan vision of perfect defense is an illusion."

The technology is too remote, the mission too complex, the possibilities for defeating or circumventing ballistic missile defenses too numerous. The original mission for SDI is no longer taken seriously by mainstream analysts. . . .

At bottom, the best hope for avoiding nuclear war lies on changing fundamentally the connection between the United States and the Soviet Union. The relationship might actually mature if General Secretary Gorbachev succeeds in liberalizing the Soviet Union, and if American leaders become astute

enough to recognize and capitalize on the opportunity. Deploying an SDI system could extinguish this hope.

In her conclusion to a discussion of "Controlling Toxic Chemicals" Sandra Postel says:

Making industries assume responsibility for more of the societal costs and risks associated with hazardous substances is crucial to fostering a transition to safer chemicals and products. Government regulators often bear the burden of showing that a substance causes unacceptable harm before they can act to restrict or ban it. If, instead, industries had to prove suspect substances safe, and if they faced strict liability for damages caused from the manufacture, use, and disposal of their products, risks would diminish throughout the chemical cycle. Risky substances would be weeded out in industrial laboratories, rather than by a regulatory agency after many years of use.

The writer points to progress in California:

Voters in California overwhelmingly approved a referendum in 1986 that shifts at least some responsibility for chemical safety over to industry. It prohibits industries from releasing chemicals on a state list of those believed to cause cancer or birth defects in a manner that might allow them to enter drinking water. It also requires the labeling of products containing those chemicals, even in trace amounts. In court actions involving exposures to substances covered by the law, industry bears the burden of proving the contested exposure harmless. If rigorously enforced, the new law in California should provide substantial incentive for the manufacture and use of safer chemicals and products.

Yet, as we all know, threats of punishment are a poor substitute for a sense of responsibility. The true goal, of which nothing is said here, is a state of mind in which manufacturers will no more think of marketing products that might do harm to unnumbered people than they would provide their own families with dubious foods. How is such a state of mind to be produced?

We do not know. Involved would be a philosophy of the fellowship of all humans and all life. Such an attitude once existed, but only in small communities, and this is the challenge which

now confronts us. How can we restore the spirit of small communities in the midst of the large social organizations we have come to term "mass societies"?

Only, we suspect, by creating within those societies smaller formations of people who have in common a sense of the group welfare. This returns us to our previous suggestion of reading E.F. Schumacher. He says in his book, *Small Is Beautiful*:

The fundamental task is to achieve smallness *within* large organization. . . . How can such a structure be achieved? From the administrator's point of view, *i.e.*, from the point of view of orderliness, it will look untidy, comparing most unfavorably with the clear-cut logic of a monolith. The large organization will consist of many semiautonomous units, which we may call *quasi-firms*. Each of them have a large amount of freedom, to give the greatest possible chance to creativity and *entrepreneurship*. . .

Everywhere people ask: "What can I actually *do*?" The answer is as simple as it is disconcerting: we can, each of us, work to put our own inner house in order. The guidance we need for this work cannot be found in science or technology, the value of which utterly depends on the ends they serve; but it can still be found in the traditional wisdom of mankind.

REVIEW

DETERMINED ALTHOUGH BEWILDERED PEOPLE

WHILE, in the foreword to her book, *Troublesome People* (Adler & Adler, distribution by Harper & Row, \$19.95), Caroline Moorehead says that it is not a history of 20th century pacifists, and not a comprehensive account of the peace movement since the first World War, it will be for many readers exactly that. The author has soaked in her material and provided a moving account of the labors, sufferings, and activities of the opponents of war in recent times. She says:

I have tried to draw a picture of what modern pacifists are actually like; to give an idea of their style, diversity, their origins and their eloquence; to show how and where their feelings about war and peace have fitted in with their other beliefs; to demonstrate how varied and above all how very numerous they have been and are today.

What have the pacifists actually accomplished? No one really knows, although it may be said that opposition to war has been growing both in America and Europe for more than seventy-five years and may some day be strong enough to make war impossible. But as long as war continues, it will be natural to say that pacifism has "failed." Caroline Moorehead, who is a journalist with the *Times* of London, also says:

Nowhere have I tried to define the term "pacifist"; pacifism has meant different things to different people at different times. Not all the people in this book would refer to themselves as "pacifists," but all would see themselves as belonging to some kind of pacifist tradition, and it is as followers of that tradition, whatever form it has taken for them, that they find a place here. That is particularly true, perhaps, in the United States, where pacifism—though not always regarded as such—has been at the heart of one of the greatest achievements of this century: the civil rights movement. Behind the tactics of non-violence lies the clearest pacifist philosophy.

Pacifist belief relies on a notion of personal morality. Conscientious objectors, who embody this

sense of responsibility, form a crucial element in pacifist ideology, though they became important only with the advent of conscription in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century.

We might add here that since its beginning in 1948, MANAS has been staffed by conscientious objectors, men who refused to enter military service in World War II. One of the first editors, a student of history, soon reached the conclusion that countries are involved in war because governments lie to the people from the very beginning. Truth is the first casualty in war, and a prospective draftee must ask himself, can war accomplish anything good for anyone when it is begun by the suppression of truth?

What becomes apparent from Caroline Moorehead's report on the beginning of World War I is the integrity and courage of the first British resisters, who were both brutally treated and imprisoned. While they were much surer of what would be wrong to do than what would be right, they knew that war was absolutely wrong and could not be persuaded or coerced into joining the military service. England passed the Military Service Act, involving conscription, early in 1916. Soon after the No-Conscription Fellowship called a meeting to prepare to help more than 2,000 young men, then united by a common determination to "refuse from conscientious motives to bear arms." The author describes the meeting in detail, noting the high quality of the leadership, which included men of the caliber of Fenner Brockway, Bertrand Russell, and Clifford Allen. Beatrice Webb was also one of the leaders.

On the second day, Fenner Brockway read out the names of 15 NCF members already arrested by the military as conscientious objectors. After each name he paused; the 2,000 men sitting in the rows of seats before him rose and waved their white pieces of paper and their white handkerchiefs in silence. At the end of the day Allen read out the agreed pledge: "We, representing thousands of men who cannot participate in warfare and are subject to the Military Service Act"—he spoke very clearly, his voice sounding through an absolutely still hall—"unite in

comradeship with those of our number who are already suffering for conscience's sake in prison or the hands of the military. We appreciate the spirit of sacrifice which actuates those who are suffering on the battlefield, and in that spirit we renew our determination, whatever the penalties awaiting us, to undertake no service which for us is wrong. . . ."

Bertrand Russell wrote in a letter to a friend:

"The spirit of the young men was magnificent. They would not listen to even the faintest hint of compromise. . . . Most of them will be arrested within the next few days and taken to camp. What will happen there, no one knows."

It was true, Caroline Moorehead says, that "no one knew." Actually, "their treatment soon became indistinguishable from torture, so that eventually 69 were dead and 39 more went mad, so determination grew among all conscientious objectors to stand firm." The writer adds:

The point was, there was a great deal more at stake here than a simple protest against warfare. As Sir John Simon had perceived, the fundamental nature of British society was about to be questioned. What was at issue was nothing less than man's individual sense of responsibility and his relationship with the state. Few of the 16,000 men who now began to come forward to declare their own particular stand against war had ever heard of Tolstoy, or read Thoreau or were indeed even particularly believing Christians. Yet, coming from a dozen view points and a dozen backgrounds in a country solidly dedicated to pursuing a war, in which not to volunteer was to be branded a coward, these hundreds, soon thousands, of objectors seem to have reached the same point, and, having reached it, found a strength with which to hold on to it. Nor were they alone. Protest tough, united, unbreakable, was to occur everywhere, all across Europe and, after 1917, in the United States, with the men standing out for their personal conviction that war was wrong. But it was in Britain, because of the nature of the British constitution, and because it was the country in which the dilemma was first and most clearly expressed that the debate took shape. In the remaining years of the war, on both sides of the Atlantic, arguments strengthened, so that, by 1919, it was never going to be quite so easy to ignore a man's right to follow his conscience in time of war—a fact of immense importance in what was to become a century of almost unceasing warfare. Persecuted, reviled,

mocked, the Anglo-Saxon conscientious objectors of the First War nonetheless laid down the foundations for all later war protest, whatever and wherever the war, and it is their stand that continues to be felt in the trials and sentences of modern war protesters.

In 1915, 150 Christians gathered in Cambridge to form the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). In the same year American and British women and others from Europe hired the largest hall they could find in The Hague and met to campaign for peace, and in December Rosika Schwimmer persuaded Henry Ford to send a "Peace Ship" across the Atlantic with food for European children.

By the end of the war—

Some 16,000 British men had brought a profession of conscience to a Tribunal. Of these, 6,312 had been arrested and 5,970 court-martialed (521 of them three times, 50 five times and three six times), and 819 men had spent over two years in prison, much of that time on bread and water and in solitary confinement. . . .

Despite this remarkable profession of a belief, the NCF (No Conscription Fellowship) had actually failed in each of its declared goals: it had been unable to prevent the passing of the Conscription Act, or, after a few months, its extension to married men. Absolute exemption was never won for the 1,330 or so men who refused to accept any alternative service, and many of its members in the end did some kind of Home Office proposed work. Their stand, their bravery, did not, in fact, either cause a repentant government to yield, or a sympathetic public to press it to do so.

But something, clearly, had been won. The conscientious objectors who emerged, one by one, from their solitary cells, did so with a feeling that they had seriously challenged the state's supremacy over the individual. Never again, many of these 16,000 men would say, was it going to be possible for man's moral stand to be ignored, nor for a democracy like Britain to take such a harsh line towards its dissenters.

In the 1920s the Gandhian influence began to be felt in England and America. Then, in 1930, Albert Einstein gave an address in which he said (in New York):

True pacifists, he announced, should stop talking and replace their words with deeds. "Even if only two per cent of those assigned to military duty should announce their refusal to fight," he declared, "governments would be powerless, they would not dare send such large numbers to jail."

In the United States the extreme mistreatment of conscientious objectors was about the same as in England, with unspeakable brutality in some instances. Again, as in England, these policies did not continue during World War II. But now, in England, women were being called up for service. The Tribunals didn't care much for women applicants, as is shown by a judge who told one applicant for exemption that "if she cared to carry the argument she was presenting to its logical conclusion, then she would be forced to eat no food at all, and thus starve to death." "And that," declared the chairman, "might be the most useful thing that you could do."

Part II of this book is given over to pacifist activity since the atom bomb exploded over Hiroshima, generating another kind of energy in support of the campaign for peace. We have no space left for an account of this activity, but enough has been quoted from *Troublesome People* to show the quality of Caroline Moorehead's work, which should be read by all who regard the making of permanent peace the only sane human objective.

COMMENTARY "SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL"

ON page two of this issue, a "design solution" is referred to. What is a "design solution"? All human problems have two sorts of solutions. One may be termed a moral solution, the other a design solution. The moral solution calls for right action, regardless of the pressure of circumstances. The design solution is intended to reduce the pressure of circumstances, allowing free play of the natural moral inclination of human beings.

Both of course are needed. But one, the response to the moral inclinations which are naturally part of virtually every human being, tends to become weak when the environmental structure of human life pushes strongly in another direction. When a framework of this sort surrounds a great many human decisions, moral obligations are largely ignored by the great majority, with the result that it becomes reasonable to speak of moral man as contrasted with immoral society.

What is meant by this phrase? In reply one might make a list of all the things that people do because they are members of society that they would hardly think of doing as individuals. What the soldier does in war is a good example.

The soldier, who is pledged to obedience to his superior Officer, when ordered to shoot and to kill a member of the opposing force, in obeying destroys another human being who has done him no harm, who would be no threat save for the fact that he, too, is a soldier who obeys his officer who instructs him to shoot and kill.

If both these men were to refuse to be obedient, there would be no more war. To design a society which does not impose enormous pressure on individuals to do what some official tells them to do is a design solution which might soon put an end to war.

This was the fundamental insight which led E.F. Schumacher to write *Small Is Beautiful*. He

proposed that if the organization of society were in terms of much smaller units, the moral inclinations of individuals would have a much better chance of finding expression. We would begin to have societies which would no longer plan courses of action that individuals would naturally decide are immoral. In such circumstances far more than the "two per cent" that Albert Einstein hoped would reject war would add their moral example and strength to the cause of peace.

Other examples of the advantages of smallness are given in both this week's "Children" article and in *Frontiers*. An immediate advantage in government of smallness would be the elimination of bureaucracy and the general simplification of our lives—a strong argument for doing what we can to move toward a bioregional organization of society.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

A JOB ONE PERSON CAN DO

SOME years ago (in 1969) Teachers College Press published *The Classroom Disaster* by Leslie A. Hart. Early in the book he discusses testing. He says:

The popularity of tests dates from the great "discovery" of psychology in the 1920's, when no comedian could subsist without a notebook full of jokes about IQs. The intelligence test seemed to offer a golden opportunity to bring new order and simplicity into complex human affairs, and testing proliferated at a frantic pace. But in recent years the fine glow has faded, giving place to the sad realization that to undiminished human complexity has now been added the complexities of testing. It is standard practice today for psychologists to preface almost any remark about testing with cautions about their limitations and technical trickiness. Nevertheless, a good part of the public, and too many teachers, continue to regard testing as a counterpart to the public scale which for a penny instantly gives both weight and fortune.

What are the complexities of testing? The writer says

We can glimpse the nature of some of the difficulties if we think first of a test to measure the relative "intelligence" of a mouse and a chicken. We construct a maze for each that we judge equally difficult to escape from, and provide food as incentive. The mouse, let us say, learns his way out after a few trials, but the chicken requires many more, and even then hardly convinces us that she knows which way to turn. The conclusion seems simple that the mouse is much more intelligent than the chicken.

But scientifically viewed, there are many questions to be asked. We remember that mice are used to small, tortuous passages much more difficult than our maze, while our chicken is used to an open barnyard. Mice are used to going where food may be. Our chick is more used to pecking at the ground wherever she may be. Ordinarily this serves our chicken quite well; to expect her abruptly to change her most fixed habits for our momentary convenience in measuring her brainpower is to ask a good deal. . . In the end, as good scientists, we had better simply report that, under the conditions of this specific test,

the mouse got out faster. The less concluded about such broad and obscure abstractions as intelligence, the better. . . . To test a roomful of boys and girls and then assume that their scores reflect their "true" ability is far from valid.

And why, one may ask, is it important to know that Kate scores better than John? How will knowing this enable the teacher to help either child?

Then there is the factor of anxiety which may affect some children much more than others. Again, the children all have different backgrounds, and a child's background may make a test either easier or more difficult. Mr. Hart remarks:

Those who administer many tests know that these are only two of the factors that may affect results. There are many more. What of the child who arrives at school the day of the test upset by a family quarrel, or in ill health, or simply tired? What of the slow reader, who on the many tests that involve reading is heavily handicapped and whose anxiety may be increased because he does not trust his reading ability? What of the child with a background different from "standard" children, or with a language difficulty? Or the child who is new in class, or one who fails to understand the instructions clearly? . . . tests intended to show IQ may be given in the second, fourth, and seventh grades, a fairly common pattern. Despite all the hazards we have so far listed, the score is set down in the record, there to stay unmodified for years. A misleading score in the second grade will stand unquestioned until the fourth grade score can be compared.

Teachers may be prejudiced by such scores. While Mr. Hart believes that the results of expert testing may prove very useful, there have been small schools which have done without any competitive testing and have found this policy to be best for the children.

In another chapter Hart examines the problems of teachers who have classes of thirty children with widely different abilities and backgrounds. He says:

The problem of differences has long been obvious: efforts to solve it to some degree go back to the last century, long before the days of testing. Here again, the administrative convenience of the

classroom system has survived over educational considerations, as one attempt after another was made to keep the class yet somehow reduce the spread teachers had to cope with.

One of the solutions familiar to parents is "homogeneous grouping," and many parents are apt to assume that the school somehow puts their children into a class with very similar peers. The impression is an illusion—sometimes rudely shattered when the child brings home a classmate who is not a neighbor. Homogeneous grouping is obviously difficult in smaller schools, and even in larger ones raises about as many problems as it alleviates. . . . The hard fact is that children differ so differently that grouping for homogeneity cannot have more than a modest effect—and then mostly by luck, or exceptional guidance skill. Let us remember, however, that few elementary schools have any trained guidance officer. If the function is performed, it is very likely to be as one of the many duties of the principal, and only as a special case will a child receive more than momentary attention. . . .

We have been looking at the class mainly from the viewpoint of the hapless teacher who must somehow handle this ill-assorted lot. If we go deeper into the mysteries of personality, we quickly see that the problem is far worse. We must remember that the *scores* made by children on various kinds of psychological or achievement tests are not the same thing as the children themselves. The children are flesh and blood human beings. They have no necessity to be alike or even to be measurable. It is only the school that is trying so desperately to translate them from humans to numbers, so it can maintain a classroom system that is essentially non-human in concept.

Later Mr. Hart says:

The facts I have set forth are in very little dispute among educators, and they have long been recognized. The lay reader may wonder: Why has the class-and-the-grade system so long been tolerated, if grading is so unworkable? Why do teachers tolerate so impossible an assignment without rebelling?

The questions are good ones, and the fact that they have recently been asked in louder and louder tones is helping to bring about the Revolution. But we must realize that children combine sensitivity with a sometimes amazing toughness. The school, while a major and long-continued influence, is only one of many. What happens to a child in his first three years of life usually affects his personality more than

all his schooling put together. Even while in school, he relates to playmates after school and on weekends, and to his family. He has his private world of activity, sometimes kept a close secret. And in our heavily organized world, he likely has many regular or scheduled activities, that range from dancing school to gang membership, from candy store to summer camp. . . .

How can help be given?

It seems clear that the need for basic guidance in terms of leading the child into the right path of development, and encouraging natural growth, is far greater in the elementary school. But this is precisely where trained guidance experts are rarest. The delicate, enormously intricate task is left in the hands of the far overburdened classroom teacher. . . .

What is the solution? It seems hardly necessary to say that the classroom is the villain, and that the classroom must give way to a far more flexible organization if each child is ever to get genuinely personal attention, a true opportunity to develop as a unique individual, not a 30-at-a-time compromise. Each child's program must be adapted to his ability, his needs, his talents, and interests. Each child must, some of the time, get the undivided, undistracted: attention of one or more teachers. Each child's progress must be continuously followed and evaluated. All this is impossible in the classroom situation, but attainable in an organization designed for these objectives.

So far as we can see, Mr. Hart has made a strong case for John Holt's view of the matter. Holt says to the parent, *Teach Your Own*. What Hart says is: "What the teacher needs, plainly, is a job that *one* person can do." Who but a parent is available to do that job?

FRONTIERS

They Did Not Hit Back

IN *Reconciliation International* for last November the editors reprinted from the Bruderhof magazine, *The Plough*, an interview with Cesar Chavez. Chavez is the man who, in 1962, organized the farm workers of California into the United Farmworkers Union, despite sage advice that migrant workers could never be organized in the United States. The workers are mostly Mexican-Americans and Filipinos and they have become a strong union. An impressive aspect of their organization is their successful boycotts in support of their strikes of California grapes, wine, and lettuce. Another notable aspect is their non-violence. In the interview, Chavez was asked how he reached his stand on non-violence. He said:

It started very early in my life. My mother would tell us stories about St. Francis, and we were taught not to fight back. So it grew in me.

When we started this work we read the history of farm workers, unions and all the violence they ran up against.

We had to make a decision. We decided to be non-violent but not so much in a preaching way as in an acting way. We decided we would not write about non-violence, because other people have done a lot more beautifully than we ever could. We knew that it is very easy to lock yourself up in your house and be non-violent toward the whole world. And it is easy to be non-violent when everybody loves you. But it's quite different when you're challenging, when you're doing the work that needs to be done to bring about social change. Reading from St. Francis, Mohandas Gandhi, and Dr. King, we came to realize that it could be done if we had faith and wanted to discipline ourselves.

We had our baptism of fire as soon as we started. Six or seven of us were picketing at a farm, and several growers came in and started beating us. I had been reading about non-violence, and I thought I was non-violent, but I was frightened then. I knew then that this was the moment. I had to decide now for non-violence. Just to realize that helped me through those first awful moments of fear.

The growers couldn't understand us. They said, "Go ahead, hit me! I can't hit you if you don't hit me back." But the strikers did not hit back. In this way the word got around that the members of the Farm Workers Union "were doing this thing non-violently." Through the years there were some martyrs. Five union men were murdered, the last one three years ago, Chavez said. "Now many of the people that are against us know that our non-violence doesn't come from cowardice but from some inner strength." Chavez tells the story of each victim, how they were killed.

The interviewer asked about the community, La Paz, the workers had founded, obtaining this reply:

It's not a community in the sense of the way you have your community. We happen to live together, and we are striving to build a community some day. The people who come and work with us are from various faiths and various nationalities. They come because they all are concerned with the basic issue of social injustice to farm workers. Almost all share the commitment to the ideals of non-violence.

The community is situated in the Tehachapi mountains, on the snow line. We have a Montessori school for our children up to the first grade, and the others go to public school about ten miles away in Tehachapi.

We have many different professions among us: lawyers, doctors, engineers, laborers, teachers. They come for varying lengths of time. Some stay most of their lives, others come for only two or three years. But out of all this mass of people we are trying to make a community. And we call it La Paz. We live and work there. It is a kind of center, not yet a community, but someday maybe.

At present the Union is fighting against the use of poisons in the fields.

Currently we are very concerned about the pesticides and the fertilizers that farmers are using on their crops. The indiscriminate and unrestricted use of these poisons has a tremendous impact on the whole environment. There are now regions in California where the excess of nitrates and pesticide residue is so great that no living organism will live.

For such disregard of nature we will pay a terrible price. Something needs to be done before it's too late.

* * *

The Nobel prizes for 1987 were awarded on last December 10. But on the day before the Right Livelihood Awards were given to five individuals by reason of their services to the meek, the lowly, and the needy underprivileged of the world. Honored in this way were Frances Moore Lappé, co-author of *Food First* and organizer of the Institute for Food and Development Policy in San Francisco. Similarly honored was the Chipho Movement of India, whose members "hug trees" to save them from being cut down. The other three were Johann Galtung, a pioneer of peace studies, Hans Peter Durr, a West German physicist and a leader against Star Wars, and finally, Mordechai Vanunu, who was kidnapped and put on trial for treason in Israel "for revealing the extent of Israel's nuclear weapons program and its ties with South Africa."

In the Fall Progress Report of *Food First News*, Frances Moore Lappé said:

For almost two decades I've been asking: why do we as a society tolerate the hunger and other needless human deprivation that as individuals we abhor? I've become convinced that it cannot be explained simply by our sense of powerlessness when confronted with the forces weighted against change. Our lack of confidence also stems from our lack of a clearly defined set of values—values that we know we can communicate effectively because they are both consistent with the interests of most Americans and built on the best of our nation's heritage.

In examination of our values she discusses freedom:

In a way perhaps no previous President has done, Ronald Reagan has reinforced one definition of freedom: unrestrained accumulation. "What I want to see above all is that this country remains a country where someone can always get rich," he said in 1983.

But in America's understanding of freedom, there's another, much longer tradition to draw on. Many of our nation's founders defined freedom not as unlimited accumulation but as unfettered human development. And the two are not incompatible.

That's why Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1785 from poverty-wracked Europe, "Because . . . inequality produces so much misery to the bulk of mankind, legislators cannot invent too many devices for subdividing property.'

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