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LIARS AND CONQUERORS

WE have from a reader back East a clipping from an English newspaper—probably an edition of the *Manchester Guardian*—providing an extract from a talk given by an eminent American editor of a well-known newspaper in this country before an audience in a university in London. "I would like," he said, "to talk about government lying." After disposing of what he called the "little lies" which seem to be a fixed policy of government, in order to convey the "right" impression of small events, he said, " Let us talk about big lies, lies that change history."

He began by recounting what Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara told the new American President, Lyndon Johnson, late in 1963, when he returned from a fact-finding trip to Vietnam, after he had said to reporters at a press conference that he was "optimistic as to the progress that had been made and could be made during the coming year" in the fight against the Vietcong. What did he tell the President? For reply the editor said:

> Buried in those Pentagon papers (which so few people ever read) lay the revelation that McNamara had told President Johnson exactly the opposite of what he had told the press and through us, the world. The Secretary of Defense returned from Vietnam "laden with gloom," according to documents in the Pentagon papers. "Vietcong progress had been great," he reported to the President, "With my best guess being that the situation has in fact been deteriorating to a far greater extent than we realize. The situation is very disturbing."

Think for a minute, the editor says, on how history could have changed if the truth had come out to the world when McNamara talked to the reporters. Or if President Johnson had taken seriously what he learned from his Secretary of Defense.

Next comes a more deliberate lie, if that is possible. The editor calls to mind an issue of *Time* which came out in August, 1964, reporting what was alleged to have happened at the Battle of Tonkin Gulf. He quotes from *Time:*

> Through the darkness, from the West and South, the intruders boldly sped. There were at least six of them Russian-designed Swatow gunboats armed with 37-mm and 28-mm guns, and P-4's. At 9.52 they opened fire on the destroyers with automatic weapons, and this time from as close as 2,000 yards. The night glowed eerily with the nightmarish glare of air-dropped flares and boats' searchlights. Two of the enemy's boats went down.

The editor comments:

> That's the kind of vivid detail that the news magazines have made famous. I don't mean to single out *Time*. On the same date *Life* said almost the same thing and that week's issue of *Newsweek* had torpedoes whipping by US ships blazing out salvo after salvo of shells. It had a PT boat bursting into flames.
>
> There was only one trouble. There was no battle. There was not a single intruder, never mind six of them. Never mind Russian-designed Swatow gunboats armed with 37mm and 28mm guns. They never opened fire. They never sank. They never fired torpedoes. They never were.

How does the editor know this?

> It has really taken 20 years for this truth to emerge. My authority is Admiral Jim Stockdale, who has written a fascinating book, *In Love and War*. Jim Stockdale was shot down over Vietnam a few days later and was a prisoner of the North Vietnamese for more than seven years.
>
> But on the night in question he was in a Sabre jet fighter flying cover over the Maddox and the Turner Joy, and he scoured the seas for more than two hours; and he is as sure as man can be that they were fighting phantom blips on a radar screen.

The editor concludes:

> In case the Vietnam years have blurred in your minds or even disappeared from your screens, may I remind you that this so-called Battle of Tonkin Gulf was the sole basis of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which was the entire justification for the United States' war against Vietnam. This non-event happened on August 4, 1964. President Johnson went on television that very night to ask the country

> to support a Congressional resolution. The resolution went to Congress the next day. Two days later it was approved unanimously by the House and 82-2 by the Senate.
>
> The "facts" behind this critically important resolution were quite simply wrong. Misinformation? Disinformation? Deceit? Whatever! Lies.

Dozens of righteous rhetorical questions sweep into the mind when confronted by the fact that our government consistently lies to us. We should, no doubt, stop calling it a democracy. What then shall we call it? At the risk of being monotonous, we recall that Thoreau said it had become a machinery that "a single man can bend to his will." He asked, "How does it become a man to behave toward this American government today? I answer that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it." Thoreau said this a hundred and thirty-eight years ago, and it has been growing in accuracy ever since.

What are we called upon to do? The readers of "Civil Disobedience" who take Thoreau seriously may find an answer to this question—or rather different answers—but others will feel that we cannot live without a government, poor and unreliable as it is. They are apparently resigned to living in an order constructed on the basis of lies. And if this is the case, we must then ask, do they deserve a government other than one which makes only perfunctory gestures toward telling the truth? In short, they *have* the government they deserve, since they do not find it intolerable.

There are of course half-measures which some of us are able to contrive. We can compose factually supported and moving essays on the vast number of people who would not have died in war if the men who run the government had had respect for the truth. Yet we know that if people in general really cared about the truth there would have been a different sort of men running the government. But can this be proved? No. Is it then true? Yes. It is true if there is any decency and reliability in the universe.

Obviously, this is a question of where reality lies. Is it on the surface, as Galileo proclaimed, only in the physical laws of nature, revealed to us by the perceptions of the senses, or is it inward and hidden, subtly declared in moments of intuition and by the pangs of conscience? Is there only one order of truth, impressed upon us by the laws of motion, or is there a more fundamental order whose rules lie in what our forefathers named moral verity, having to do with human motives, intentions, the radius of responsibilities concerning what we conceive to be right?

Is there some strange mathematical relation between the moral world and the physical world, as the result of which, in a time scale we do not understand, moral causes are translated into physical effects, in the same way that the moral qualities of a human are eventually printed on his face, exhibiting slovenly features or ennobling expression, a slack indifference or the sign marks of dignity? Of some help in considering this question would be the book, *The Face of Lincoln*, compiled by James Mellon and published a few years ago by Viking Press. It contains all the photographs ever taken of Lincoln. However, it seems fair to say that those notable individuals who are convinced of the primary reality of moral law do not seem to have been persuaded of this by argument, but have thought in this way since the early years of their lives. Yet, at the same time, they have sought to elaborate their conviction by reference to the great scriptures of the past and by study of the lives and works of those in whom the same faith was manifest.

Meanwhile, those who remain indifferent to such questions, or are uncertain about them, make a vast field for talented liars to cultivate. The daily newspapers seem filled with accounts of the confusions produced by these lies, the press being apparently almost as susceptible to distortions and misconceptions as the general public, the exceptions being such few individuals as the editor we have been quoting. If this is the situation with which we are confronted, then there are only two things we are able to do. One is to become preachers of a sort, advocating the reality of the moral law Since we know that few preachers are able to speak in ways that are acceptable to human intelligence—the difficulty being to separate their counsels from egocentric righteousness and moral conceit—we soon realize that the only influential preachers or

moralists have been men of virtual genius, Plato and Thoreau being examples. Therefore, becoming second-rate moralists seems almost like becoming half-conscious liars who will add to the confusion instead of reducing it. For those with ambitions in this direction, devoted study of Plato and Thoreau, and a few others, seems the best recommendation.

Yet there remains the second thing we are able to do—to begin to rearrange our lives and to live in ways which make lying less convenient and harder to get away with. We are thinking here of the plans of the bioregionalists. The bioregionalists are disgusted with, among other things, public lying and its effects. Their plans, as put into effect, would remove much of the opportunity for public lying, since life in comparatively small communities, where issues are easily understood, makes popular deceptions impractical. The conditions of water, air, soil and local transport are not affected by what is going on in Nicaragua or the Middle East. Such affairs are not the business of the bioregionalist and interest in them seems a distant folly of national government. As a bioregionalist spokesman, Peter Berg, put it recently: "Is it self-defeating to avoid established governments other than immediately local ones? Not if we want to anticipate a society whose direction already lies outside those institutions." There will still be many things going on—the effects of public lying—that we disapprove of, but what we cannot control we have to live with, just as the greatest reformers of all time, men like the Buddha, Socrates, and Jesus, managed to do. A step in the right direction is still in the right direction, a step, or sometimes a stride.

We have some other material to consider here—the words of the right kind of preacher. What kind of preacher is that? He is one who leaves moral perception to his hearer or reader, and does not try to instruct people at this level He therefore gives no offense but deals with facts that may stir perception into awareness. We have at hand a clipping from the *Los Angeles Times* (May 31, 1987) which presents an extract from a lecture given by Wallace Stegner, the novelist, and published in the spring volume of the *Michigan Quarterly Review.* He begins by recalling the Newlands Act (of 1913) which was intended to benefit the small farmer, as was the Homestead Act, the Desert Land Act, the Timber and Stone Act, and other land-disposal legislation.

> The publicized purpose of federal reclamation was the creation of family farms that would eventually feed the world and build prosperous rural commonwealths in deserts formerly fit for nothing but horned toads and rattlesnakes. To ensure that these small farmers would not be done out of their rights by large landowners and water users, Congress wrote into the act a clause limiting the use of water under Reclamation Bureau dams to the amount that would serve a family farm of 160 acres.

As we know, the 160-acre limitation no longer applies, having been revised almost out of existence, and California is now the preserve of enormous agricultural undertakings, which have the problems of large-agriculture—salinization and pollution and declining fertility. Stegner goes on:

> Behind the pragmatic, manifest-destination purpose of pushing Western settlement was another motive: the hard determination to dominate Nature, which historian Lynn White, in a well-known essay, identified as part of our Judeo-Christian heritage. Nobody implemented that impulse more uncomplicatedly than the Mormons, a chosen people who believed the Lord when he told them to make the desert blossom as the rose. Nobody expressed it more bluntly than a Mormon hierarch, John Widtsoe, in the middle of the irrigation campaigns: "The destiny of man is to possess the whole earth; the destiny of the earth is to be subject to man. There can be no full conquest of the earth, and no real satisfaction to humanity, if large portions of the earth remain beyond his highest control."
>
> That doctrine offends me to the bottom of my not-very-Christian soul. It is related to the spirit that builds castles of incongruous luxury in the desert. It is the same spirit that between 1930 and the present has so dammed, diverted, used and reused the Colorado River that its saline waters now never reach the Gulf of California, but die in the sand miles from sea; that has set the Columbia, a far mightier river, to tamely turning turbines; that has reduced the Missouri, the greatest river on the continent, to a string of ponds; that has "recklessly pumped down the underground water table of every Western valley and threatens to dry up even so prolific a source as the Ogalalla Aquifer; that has made the Salt River valley of Arizona, and the Imperial, Coachella and great Central valleys of California into gardens of fabulous

> but deceptive richness; that has promoted a new rush to the West fated, like the beaver and grass and gold rushes, to recede after doing great environmental damage.

This extract from Stegner's address was given the title, "The West Was Spoiled, *Not* 'Won'," by the *Los Angeles Times*. It gives us to think.

Stegner goes on:

> The Garden of the World has been a glittering dream, and many find its fulfillment exhilarating. I do not. I have said that I think of the main-stem dams that made it possible as original sin, but there is neither a serpent nor a guilty first couple in the story. In Adam's fall we sinned all. Our very virtues as a pioneering people, the very genius of our industrial civilization, drove us to act as we did. God and Manifest Destiny spoke with one voice urging us to "conquer" or "win" the West; and there was no voice of comparable authority to remind us of Mary Austin's quiet but profound truth, that the manner of the country makes the usage of life there, and that the land will not be lived except in its own fashion.

This is the sort of counsel that does not tell us what to think or believe, but simply repeats those "quiet and profound truths" which we did not know and have been neglecting for centuries.

Is there anything else that can be said? Volumes, no doubt. But where are the writers with the insight and skill to say them? Yet such writers exist. In an earlier generation we had Lewis Mumford and Joseph Wood Krutch, and in the present we have Wendell Berry, whose *The Unsettling of America* is a modern classic. These are writers who intend to stir the imagination, not lay down the law. They do not recite the logic of two plus two, but reach and try to touch the inner feeling of human beings. Conceivably, they are the highest resources we have. If they can show us how and why they think as they do, we may discover what we are here on earth for. It is evident enough that we have not yet found this out, and that our present methods are not the way.

Following is the final paragraph in the extract by Wallace Stegner:

> Obviously, reclamation is not the panacea it once seemed. Plenty of people in 1987 are opposed to more dams, and there is plenty of evidence against the long-range viability and the social and environmental desirability of large-scale irrigation agriculture. Nevertheless, millions of Americans continue to think of the water engineering in the West as one of our proudest achievements, a technology that we should export to backward Third World nations to help them become as we are.

The Third World countries, alas, have believed them, and tried to become what we are, to the practical ruin of the lives of their people, as some of them now testify.

There are remedies, of course, for all these tendencies, but they are not likely to be applied until after the practical collapse of the industrial countries, when there will be far fewer resources with which to start over again. Disaster and pain, then, are the first requirement of constructive change. The fault, if that is the word to use, does not lie only with our leaders, but with the people as well, who chose the leaders by supporting them. We live in a world that is not likely to get any better until we all recognize that there are no legitimate scapegoats, no one to punish, no one to blame. There may be a few evil men, but they would be powerless except for the great mass of ignorant humans who have, so far, learned only how to be followers.

The thing to do, then, is to seek out the few who have begun to do the right thing and join them. Sooner or later the time will come when the ugliness and difficulty of the common life will become so great that people will at last stop wanting to be rich, will want only to live natural, happy, and useful lives. In that day the liars will no longer be believed, the countryside will be reverenced, and people will have self-respect.

REVIEW
A FORMER SOLDIER RETURNS

THE material we have for review, *Going Back*, by W. D. Ehrhart, published as Pendle Hill Pamphlet No. 272, tells the story of a Quaker poet who enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps at age seventeen in June, 1966, and served in Vietnam. "In December, 1985, Ehrhart," the Introduction says, "returned to see for himself the country against which he had waged war." He returned as a Vietnam Veteran Against War when he was thirty-seven.

A little after his arrival he learned that he could not visit the regions where he had fought because of the devastation of a severe typhoon.

> My friends had died in places called Hieu Nhon and Dien Ban. I had lost my youth in places called Ai Tu and Phouc Trac. I had need to see those places again, to see children playing and old men tending water buffalo on the once-bloody soil upon which I'd nearly died. I had dreamed of those places for years, and I had come a long way physically and emotionally to see them.

He cared little about Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), yet exploring them he began to get interested. In Hanoi he visited Van Mieu Pagoda, the Temple of Literature, the first university in Vienam.

> Founded in 1077, it operated continuously for eight centuries. Now it is preserved as a museum and cultural shrine. "Literature is as necessary as the sunshine," says the middle-aged woman who is curator. "On that balcony there, the poets used to come to read their poems to the people." She reaches into her pocket and comes up with a small enamel pin with the Poets' Balcony painted on it. "I want you to have this," she says. "When the Americans were here before, they bombed us. I'm glad you've come to the Temple of Literature. I'm very glad to meet you."
>
> "Do you remember the bombing?" I ask Duong Van Loan, my twenty-five-year-old interpreter/guide.
>
> "Yes," she replies, "it was terrible." She explains that she and most other children of Hanoi were evacuated to the countryside in 1965. For seven years, she lived with her grandparents, seeing her parents only once each week. "We were close enough to hear the sirens and the guns and the bombs exploding. When the raids finally stopped, we were so happy that we ran all the way back to the city."

In the Cu Chi District, west of Saigon, Ehrlich was taken to visit Nguyen Thi Na, a woman sixty-seven years old.

> Inside, I bow uneasily to Mrs. Na and take a seat across the table from her. The walls are bare, except for a row of five identical certificates, framed in black and trimmed in red and yellow. I recognize the seal of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on each certificate, but cannot read the words which are Vietnamese. Mr. Duc begins to introduce me but before he has finished, Mrs. Na's eyes are brimming with tears.
>
> "I gave all five of my sons to the Revolution," she says through an interpreter, her toothless mouth trembling with the effort to maintain control of her voice, "and all five of them are dead." She gestures sharply to the five certificates hanging above her head. "I have suffered so much misery—and you did this to me."
>
> She does not say: the Americans did this. "You did this to me," she says. It is uncanny, almost as if she can see me as I once was: a young American Marine slogging through flooded paddy fields, armed to the teeth, frightened and mean. The wrinkled leathery skin of her face crinkles into a grimace, and the tears begin to fall onto the bare wood of table between us. And I can only sit in stunned silence, dizzy from heat and shock. . . .
>
> What can I say to this lonely old woman who already knows what I am? This is not what I wanted, I think vaguely as another wave of nausea washes over me; this is not it at all. . . . For years I have wanted to go back. To walk along paddy dikes without fear of mines. To stroll through the streets of Hue that I had once helped to fill with rubble and bodies. To see green rice growing on that filthy lump of mud and barbed wire up along the Demilitarized Zone called Con Thien. I felt certain that if I would only see the Vietnamese getting on with their lives, the war gone and the awful wreckage of war grown over and forgotten, I too would be able to let go.

Being a poet, which is to say, an honest man, he wrote for Mrs. Na:

> I always told myself,
> if I ever got the chance to go back,
> I'd never say "I'm sorry"

to anyone. Christ,

those guys I saw on television once:
sitting in Hanoi, the cameras rolling,
crying, blubbering
all over the place. Sure,

I'm sorry. I never meant
to do the things I did.
But that was nearly twenty years ago:
enough's enough.

If I ever go back,
I always told myself,
I'd hold my head steady
and look them in the eye.

But here I am at last—
and here you are.
And you lost five sons in the war.
And you haven't any left.

And I'm staring at my hands
and eating tears,
trying to think of something else to say
besides "I'm sorry."

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* * *

Nearly everyone knows something about the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl in the Ukraine last year, but hardly anyone has heard of another disaster which occurred six months later, at the end of October—a fire in the Sandoz chemical warehouse on the outskirts of Basel, which, according to an editorial in the *Ecologist* (No. I, Vol. 17, 1987), rendered "a seventy-five mile stretch of the Rhine lifeless." The writer, Nicholas Hildyard, one of the editors, says that if our rivers and groundwaters are to be protected from such chemical poisonings, "the changes required in society will be far more profound than those dictated by the phasing out of nuclear power—if only because highly toxic chemicals play a far greater role in our lives than nuclear energy."

The fire was caused, it is said, because unidentified "animals" gnawed the electrical wiring.

Over thirty different agricultural chemicals were stored in the warehouse, including 2 5 tonnes of the insecticide parathion (banned in many countries and classified by the World Health Organization as "highly toxic"), 12 tonnes of the mercury-based fungicide Tillex, 10 tonnes of the insecticide Fenithrothion (implicated as a cause of Reye's Syndrome in children), and 323 tonnes of the insecticide Disfulfeton (judged to be twice as toxic to rats as potassium cyanide). Up to 30 tonnes of these and other pesticides, fungicides and colourants were washed into the Rhine by the water hosed onto the warehouse in an attempt to put out the blaze.

Experts are agreed that the accident could have been even worse. Drums of chemicals and other debris blasted into the air by the explosions in the burning warehouse quickly holed the roof of an adjacent building, where drums of sodium were being stored. As firemen played their hoses onto the building in order to prevent the main fire from spreading, the drums were doused in water. Had that water come into contact with any of the sodium—due to a ruptured drum, for example—the result would have been an almighty explosion which could have blown apart nearby storage tanks containing the nerve gas, Phosgene. . . .

No sooner had the blaze at Sandoz been put out than scientists monitoring the progress of the slick as it passed through West Germany announced that they had detected high concentrations of the herbicide Atrazine—a chemical which was not listed as stored in the Sandoz warehouse. Only later did the chemical giant Ciba-Geigy admit that it too had suffered a major spill—purportedly the day before the Sandoz accident—which, according to the company, resulted in the release of 100 gallons of Atrazine into the Rhine.

Other observers estimated the release at fifteen times what the company claimed.

COMMENTARY
THE PACE OF EVOLUTION

THE most sensible comment that we feel able to make about the contents of this issue is that the human race is in the process of evolution, and that evolution, for humans, is essentially moral, and that, finally, as to status, we are still in the primary grades.

It seems absolutely clear that individuals who guide their lives and make their decisions according to moral principle are a comparatively small minority, that distinguished teachers of the human race—we speak of men like the Buddha, like Plato and some of the Neoplatonists—had reached a place in their development which qualified them to help their fellows in ways both wise and uncommon; wise in understanding what is within the capacity of the great majority to understand, and uncommon in their ability to point to the steps of progress appropriate to a particular moment of history.

Our needs certainly change from age to age. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it now seems obvious, the American people needed a strong central government in order to provide a field for the human development that political freedom made possible.

But today a "strong central government" has become so potent for the abuse of power that decentralization has become the by-word for nearly all thoughtful individuals. The virtue of the past, in other words, has become the justification of tyrannical power in the present.

We must conclude, then, that wisdom for the eighteenth century is not wisdom at all in the closing years of the twentieth century. We have other lessons to learn. We might ask ourselves, would a man like Abraham Lincoln who, more than a hundred years ago, maintained that the preservation of the Union was the highest duty of American patriots, say the same thing today? What have we to learn, now, that we were far from being able to understand in Lincoln's time?

What we now need to learn may lie with bioregionalists like Peter Berg, with novelists like Wallace Stegner, with agriculturalists like Wendell Berry and Wes Jackson. Are we, in short, keeping pace with the processes of our evolution?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
THE MALADY OF SCOTLAND

TEN years ago, in this space, we gave attention to two books by the Scottish educator, R. F. Mackenzie—*The Unbowed Head* and *State School*—saying that we hoped to read more by him. We said then:

> What he writes only *seems* to be about schools. His books are really about how human attitudes are at the root of all human problems, and they explore the modes and hopes for changing them. . . . The important thing is his discussion of good teachers, how they work, what they do, and why they do it.

In *The Unbowed Head*—the story of how he was fired as the headmaster of a public school in Aberdeen because he believed in treating all children considerately and encouraging their thinking—he tells about the effort of good teachers to overcome the habitual distrust of all teachers on the part of Scottish children. The distrust of teachers was deep-seated. He tells of several students who "were proof against kindness and cups of coffee, and retained their suspicion of the year masters, regarding them as a more insidious type of prefect of the establishment." He wrote:

> There is the story about a class who were asked to write about the police. One boy wrote, "The police is bastards" and left it at that; not another word. The school and the police thereupon cooperated in an exercise in public relations. The boy was taken to police headquarters, shown the nature of their work, entertained in the canteen, and taken out in a car. Back in school he was given another chance to write his essay. He wrote, "The police is cunning bastards."

We don't know what happened to Mr. McKenzie after he was fired, but it seems evident that he was never unemployed.

We now have from a reader in New Zealand something else that he has written. It is an essay which occupies part of the program for a theatrical production called *The Jotters*, produced, our reader says, by the Wildcat Theatre Company in Scotland, and which "examined education in Scotland." Mackenzie's essay, in the opinion of our reader, is of value "as a summary of the views of this remarkable teacher and very warm human being whose whole life has been devoted to the happiness of children and the unfolding of their potential as full human beings."

Mackenzie begins his essay:

> The best text I know for a lesson on Scotland's schools comes from a school in Soweto. Eight years ago in Johannesburg a Soweto headmaster told me the story. A black teacher was teaching a lesson on citizenship, and a white inspector was sitting at the back of the classroom. A black pupil asked "Sir, am I a citizen of this country?" The black teacher answered with care. "You have heard what was said about the rights of citizenship and the duties of citizenship. I must leave it to you to decide the answer to your question."
>
> Before then, most black parents of Soweto like ambitious working class parents in Scotland, were still eager that their children should "better themselves" and do the lessons and pass the examinations. It's different now. They've lost faith in the schools. They have discovered that the master race uses the schools to discipline its work force without conferring on them the dignity of citizenship.
>
> The same idea is beginning to dawn on the minds of some Scottish pupils. Apartheid is clear in South Africa because it is a matter of black and white. In Scotland it is masked, white and white; but it is apartheid just the same, the privileged rulers and the majority who work for them. After all those years in Scottish education, it is only now, that I have become aware that the schools are not on our side. They are the agencies of the rulers. They bring us up to do what we are told, and not to speak back, to learn our lessons and pass the examinations. They stop us from asking our own questions by making us memorize the acceptable, mark-earning answers to the questions we didn't ask. They absorb us in the business of gathering marks, which is a good way to prepare us for the adult preoccupation with gathering money. The mark-earning and the money-earning stifle cooperation and compassion. We are taught to be fiercely competitive. The philosophy is remorseless individualism.

Mr. Mackenzie is not bitter but he is certainly uncompromising. He has seen through the prevailing pretenses of his time and lives a life founded on another faith. Somehow, such men, if they are strong and survive, write books to encourage others to think and become independent. Speaking of his own experience, he says:

> One of the myths that I grew up with was that the Scottish Education Department and its masters in Whitehall wanted just that, a generation of confident youth asking questions about everything. My own experience of the Department is that that was the last thing they wanted. They wanted docile pupils. "He or she never gave any trouble in class"—that was regarded as a great compliment to a pupil, a testimonial guaranteeing a favorable response to a job application. Pure capitalism. The maintenance of apartheid. "Education for servitude," as Huddleston described black education in South Africa.

This writer is not really campaigning for "Socialism," as we read him, but for an atmosphere in the schools free of the pressures induced by capitalist ideology. As he puts it:

> To clear the log-jam of ideas and prepare for new ways of thought, we have to dynamite the examination system. . . . The people who control Scottish education love their examinations more than they love their children. . . . Capitalism depends on the tutored answers that the examinations enforce, the intensive individualism, the apartheid induced by classrooms "streamed" and "set" and pressurized to produce more, the worship of material success.
>
> A relaxed classroom freed from the examination taskmasters, would be a place where everybody belonged and contributed, articulating their fears, their wayward impulses, their unspoken ambitions, their gaps in understanding, all the things that at present they suppress, fearing that all their classmates conform to the accepted stereotype of "normality" and that they alone are different. Confidence grows in the warmer atmosphere of an examination-free classroom and, with that confidence, the pupils begin to frame their ideas and feelings into words, however clumsy and ill-fitting. Practice in articulating their ideas helps intelligence to grow. That would already be a long way from the restrictive atmosphere of Scottish working-class upbringing and its gruff put-down, "Dinna speak back tae me."
>
> A warm, relaxed classroom is a microcosm of a *whole* community. To *make whole is to heal*. A large part of large part of Scotland's malady is that it is a deeply divided society. "Divide and rule" is a capitalist policy. A classroom without the apartheid of class or color or intelligence quotient, where all the pupils feel that they are members, is a classroom in which compassion and mutual understanding grow.

There are a few schools in Scotland today, Mackenzie says, which are moving in this direction. "But for most of our young in Scotland, it remains education in a cold climate. And it's getting colder."

Some indication of the extent of the changes Mackenzie would introduce is given by what he says about "school history," which "glorifies the big shots." "The heroes we are to admire are those who kill the most people." He finds the *Odyssey* "a story about Greek thugs, a death book." He adds: "The aristocratic contempt for the majority of human beings, the brutish soldiery, has continued on parade from the Plains of Troy to the playing fields of Eton."

Such a man raises questions that need to be raised.

FRONTIERS

The Land as Therapy

A REFLECTIVE person may justly conclude that he lives in a demented society. In this century nations have squandered at least forty million lives in wars of extreme ferocity fought about issues a Washington and Jefferson could have settled over a pint of claret. The German experience with Hitler and the American hysteria of McCarthyism demonstrate the nearness of the public mind to mass madness. Ferdinand Lundberg's *The Treason of the People* (1954) shows us that Americans in mass daily betray the ideals of our republic, shun libraries and lecture halls for ballgames and TV sit com, fail to educate themselves concerning the most elemental matters, avoid their basic duties as citizens, trash up their country quite unconscionably and complain incessantly about matters which commonsense and displays of individual responsibility would eliminate. A recent poll revealed that America's favorite recreation is shopping. If this is true, what hope is there for a society that shuns Shakespeare, Darwin, the revelations of science, great books generally, theaters, museums and lecture halls to throng shopping malls in mindless pursuit of unneeded possessions? This piling about in quest of "diversion" and "sensation" surely stirs a desire to escape the madding crowd to an island of peace. Real islands set amid silver seas are hard to find and are usually not paradisical when reached.

I have found a substitute that is quite as soothing and much more constructive. Millions of Americans can afford its cost, and its benefits can continue to the end of one's days. It can help one to become a sage and to accept with equanimity the inevitability, the necessity, and the justice of one's death.

I speak of the adoption of a bit of ill-used, exhausted and desolate land as a personal responsibility—the same responsibility displayed in the adoption of a child. The nation abounds in worn-out farms, hills eroded in places to bedrock, soils leached and acidic, and near-deserts in the matter of wild life. In a headlong rush to occupy the mountains and plains our ancestors burned the trees or sent them to saw mills, plowed up the mighty turf of the plains, and made farms everywhere from Appalachian hollows to desert gulches. Then, in our own time, they scuttled into towns, cities, and immeasurable string communities that turn highways into main streets. This process has left behind a vast legacy of land that cries out in subtle ways for intelligent intervention and rescue. If a family undertakes such a project it will prove immensely educational and satisfying. It will also provide beneficial exercise as a substitute for the witless toil of jogging and "pumping iron."

Soil rejuvenation need not be expensive or complicated. As a matter of fact there are federal agencies that will pick up nearly all of the bill. Nature and time will do most of the work if the land's legal owners will give them a reasonable chance. My wife and I have brought a dozen acres of useless Appalachian hillside back to a diversity of life and utility in a twenty-seven-year undertaking that has cost us less than a thousand dollars. It has given us many times that in pride and peace of mind.

From hill base almost to the cap-rock our land had been a clear field for more than a century. It had been cultivated in corn until hoe and plow sent the last of the fertile soil to the Mississippi delta. Then cattle browsed it for decades until the exhausted ground gave up the struggle to generate new trees. Thereafter it collapsed into such extreme acidity that it could support nothing except clumps of broom sedge and an occasional spindly pine or cedar. It had continued in this state for about fifty years—unsightly, economically valueless, an expanse of hard soil and protruding rocks that shed rainfall almost instantly, thereby contributing to frequent regional flooding.

In 1960 we planted the land in white and southern pines at intervals of six feet. The soil was too poor to support any other species of trees, and for a long time our seedlings scarcely grew at all. But they survived, slowly strengthened their roots and suddenly, after five years, began to grow. By r981 they were crowding one another and we hired men to use chain saws to fell about half of them. These felled saplings were stripped of their branches and the resulting detritus of limbs and trunks was left to

rot on the ground. The decaying wood caught and held the annual needle fall and bark scale, and a slow increment of soil began.

Later we had the lower branches removed from the surviving trees and they were added to the rot. At this point growth sped up and young tulip trees appeared as competitors. Then some hemlocks and beeches raised their crowns along a narrow bench. A dozen black walnuts carried in by rodents sprouted and took root in a ravine.

Most of the next thinnings went into brush piles to shelter wild life. The tree growth quickened anew and today our once-desolate hill is a lively place. The biggest of our white pines could provide in their butt cuts some two by eight planks. Our tulip "poplars" are at least eight inches within the bark. Insects moved in to eat the wood and birds showed up to devour the insects. The place is alive with springtime titmice, robins, warblers and chickadees. Black snakes and copperheads have returned to the pioneers' old rock piles, and there are opossums, rabbits and ground squirrels. I have twice spotted a bobcat taking liberties with our premises, and on a walk in March I startled five wild turkeys which flew away amid frantic commotion and much beating of wings. All of our wild neighbors treat us with condescending sauciness.

Springs, or rather seeps, trickle under the new layer of mold. The rate of growth is now quite startling. The pines thrust up about 15 inches annually, and the voracious tulip trees do nearly as well. This once barren land has become an encouraging woodland with splendid prospects for the future. Another human generation will bring our little forest to a mixed environment of soft and hard woods, ferns and flowers, and the settled habitat of a varied wild life. If the nation needs them the trees will then be grist for saw mills and particle board factories. After that the site will be ready for a new cycle of growth, this time with oaks, hickories and other hard woods.

Throughout we have had to struggle against fire and vandals. Fire can spring up from a discarded cigaret, a lightning bolt, or in some other wholly mysterious way. Many hunters do not hesitate to fire a .30-.30 slug into a four-inch sapling. We had our problems with both of these menaces but we survived, and so did our trees.

When I walk amidst the smooth slender trunks and contemplate the rapidity of the land's revival I am immensely encouraged. Clusters of wild violets amid shaded stones that were once sun-baked and unspotted with moss have led me to muse with Shakespeare that there are indeed more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophies.

I urge all who will listen to do as my wife and I have done. Find some jaded land and buy it. Consult the county agricultural agent and state forestry experts about it. If it is practical to do so put some limestone on it to counteract its acidity. Plant it in trees and thin the stands as they grow or, if circumstances allow, turn it into a clover-rich meadow. Then watch the wild things discover it and make it their nesting and burrowing ground. In transforming itself from aridity to abundance it will provide a strong new bond between an American family and the vast rich continent their ancestors so precipitously cleared. They will acquire practical knowledge of planting bars, saws and axes. They will come to know the seasons and when to expect their furry, feathered and slithering tenants to appear. They will learn in microcosm geography, geology, zoology and meteorology. And their new knowledge will come so quietly and easily that they will scarcely be aware of their fresh understandings.

It is a wonderful way to grow in wisdom, while enriching a nation that cannot grow by a single inch though its people multiply ceaselessly. A healing land can be therapeutic in the treatment of many human ills.

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