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IN QUEST OF BALANCE

THE flow of reading matter concerned with human pain goes on and on. The desk of a weekly where incoming mail is received is not really different from other magazine editorial desks, except that the pace is heightened on a weekly, with the impacts of available material somehow corresponding to the frequency of publication. The question is always: What deserves attention, and how should it be used?

The question is simply practical, from one point of view. It is practical because it has to be answered: the paper is going to come out each week and it will have contents chosen by the editors. But the question is also an overwhelming one: Are there some facts or events which have greater importance than anything else? How is "importance" measured?

This question can have no definitive reply, but comment is possible. An illuminating perspective is supplied by Barbara Tuchman in the Foreword to her book on the fourteenth century (*A Distant Mirror*)*:*

> Disaster is rarely as pervasive as it seems from recorded accounts. The fact of being on record makes it appear continuous and ubiquitous whereas it is more likely to have been sporadic both in time and place. Besides, persistence of the normal is usually greater than the effect of disturbance, as we know from our own times. After absorbing the news of the day, one expects to face a world consisting entirely of strikes, crimes, power failures, broken water mains, stalled trains, school shutdowns, muggers, drug addicts, neo-Nazis and rapists. The fact is that one can come home—in the evening—on a lucky day—without having encountered more than one or two of these phenomena. This has led me to formulate Tuchman's law, as follows: "The fact of being reported multiplies the apparent extent of any deplorable development by five- to tenfold" (or any figure the reader would care to supply).

Our historian is here not meaning to say, comfortingly, "Things are not really so bad," but to induce in the reader a sense of proportion. The bad things go on happening, and they are really bad, but unnoticed good things are happening, too, and only for this reason do we have the strength and perspective to try to do something to prevent the bad things. Without balance, we can't do much of anything. Yet we need to know about the bad things.

Some people will disagree. They will say, "I have enough bad things on my plate already—all I can handle or need to know." Or they will say: "Tell about the good things; the world is already a very depressing place."

But some others will say: "So long as these terrible things are happening, nothing else has importance! Suppose they were happening to *you*?" Considerable balance is needed to answer that question, and who, with the exception of genuine sages, will be able to feel comfortable with his answer? Nor will even a sage's reply reflect really comfortable feelings, because no sage is immune to the pain abroad in the world.

One thing is sure: No *routine* answer to this question—which comes up incessantly—can be permitted. Yet there is another general comment with bearing on whatever decision is made. In a paper done in 1962, "The Unacceptability of Disquieting Facts," Dr. Lester Greenspoon, a psychiatrist at Harvard, gave a conclusion supported by research, although common sense seems enough to confirm what he says:

> The truth about the nature and risk of thermonuclear war is available, the reason why it is not embraced is because it is not acceptable. People cannot risk being overwhelmed by the anxiety which might accompany a fully cognitive and affective grasp of the world situation and its implications for the future. It serves a man no useful purpose to accept this truth if to do so leads only to the development of very disquieting feelings, feelings which would

interfere with his capacity to be productive, to enjoy life, and to maintain his mental equilibrium.

. . . he who would have others know "the truth" must take into account what "the truth" would mean to them and how they would respond to it. The truth is a relativity in interpersonal affairs; it has meaning only in relation to people, and this meaning is often difficult to anticipate. The messenger of "truth" bears part of the responsibility for the result of his effort.

Well, that helps to establish the importance of balance—not the balance itself, but its importance. And then, to re-establish the problem, one might read in Jonathan Kozol's latest book, *The Night 1s Dark and I Am Far from Home:*

Witnesses tell the nation of starvation in the Deep South: "We see malnourished babies a year old weighing seven pounds. We see the results in mental retardation. . . . I have seen children . . . three, four, and five years old, who weighed only twenty pounds."

If we did not first *know* about these things, if we did not have at hand the means of total and immediate relief, if there were not doctors living comfortably in good hundred-thousand-dollar homes in Great Neck, Greenwich and Grosse Point, if there were not milk and meat and medication and good comfortable warm clothes, if there were no roads or railroads to transport the personnel and produce, if it were all complex, intricate, secret and unknown, then perhaps we might explain it somehow as a riddle to be worked out by sophisticated technocrats and experts who can better understand these things than simple people like ourselves. It is not complex, however; it is not sophisticated. It is not intricate or undiscovered, secret or unknown. It is a clear and simple matter of the inability of intellectually asphyxiated people to summon up the courage for an overwhelming and resistless instant of denunciation. *We do not possess the sense of moral leverage to rise up and to denounce the evil now committed in our name.*

To drive his point home, Kozol tells about a woman he knows who lives in Roxbury (Mass.), raising four children on $2800 a year. Her account of their everyday life is appalling. She said:

I gave up waiting in the line for welfare food because they shame you so. I had some money extra from the year before when I was doing housework; but that nearly drove me crazy with my own kids here at home, plaster falling out of the walls, the rats we got, and they be waiting to get into bed there with the children. "You know, Elizabeth, you mean as Hell," that lady said to me one time. I said to her: "Lady, Hell is mean." She look at me a minute, like she don't know who I am or what I said."

Kozol comments here:

Regarding the plaster: It is covered with sweet and sticky lead paint that poor children eat or chew as it flakes off the wall. The lead paint poisons the brain-cells of infants. Children die, are paralyzed, sometimes go blind, if they eat it and chew it over a long period of time.

The landlords of Roxbury live in the beautiful country west of Boston. They send their children to the Montessori Schools and little schools modeled on Summerhill. They have their yachts in Falmouth Harbor. Buildings at universities are erected with the money donated by the landlords of Roxbury, and the names of the landlords of Roxbury are carved in handsome letters of New Hampshire granite upon the lintels of the doorways of the libraries and the dormitories that they pay for. The law does not compel a landlord to replace, repaint, or cover over the sweet, sticky plaster that paralyzes children. The law does allow a landlord to take action to evict a woman like Elizabeth who misses one rent-payment by as much as fifteen days.

It does practically nothing for our sense of balance to say that a full account—with, say, the same amount of individual detail—of the pain, misery, and lack of hope around the world would fill a set of volumes many times the size of the *Encyclopedia Britannica,* with "revised editions" coming out every year. Well, someone might say that those landlords, after all, can be prosecuted and made to do the right thing, if we pass a law or two. That is correct; sometimes a law or two is passed; but then there are other things going wrong, as bad or worse. And why are such laws so long in coming, and when passed so often have "loopholes" in them? We know the answer. The government is laggard; it has to be pushed, and the lawmakers, most of them, have other priorities. Sometimes they are interested only in the imperatives of war, which may involve evils even worse than the ones Kozol catalogues at length. This is no state secret. Henry L. Stimson,

long Secretary of War for the United States, wrote in *Foreign Affairs* in 1947:

> We must never forget, that under modern conditions of life, science, and technology, all war has become greatly brutalized, and that no one who joins it, even in self-defense, can escape becoming also in a measure brutalized. Modern war cannot be limited in its destructive method and the inevitable debasement of all participants. . . . A fair scrutiny of the last two World Wars makes clear the steady intensification in the inhumanity of the weapons and methods employed by both, the aggressors and the victors. In order to defeat Japanese aggression, we were forced, as Admiral Nimitz has stated, to employ a technique of unrestricted submarine warfare, not unlike that which 25 years ago was the proximate cause of our entry into World War I. In the use of strategic air power the Allies took the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians in Germany and Japan. . . . We as well as our enemies have contributed to the proof that the central moral problem is war and not its methods, and that a continuance of war will in all probability end with the destruction of our civilization.

This passage is given in a footnote to a closing page of Albert Speer's *Inside the Third Reich.* Jonathan Kozol, a man made almost desperate by the pain he has seen, refers to this former high-ranking Nazi who served twenty years in prison after the war, then published an illuminating book on the ways in which evil gets a hold on human beings. Kozol's remark is this:

> Several million Jews and gypsies, Russian, French and Belgian, Dutch and other European people, would in all likelihood be alive today if Albert Speer—that brilliant and, in certain terrifying ways, attractive German counterpart to so many of our own most skillful social engineers and planners and advisers—had only once walked into Hitler's office with a time bomb, instead of a blueprint, in his briefcase.

Well, that's only a casual suggestion, but it recalls the play by Albert Camus, *The Just Assassins,* which gave an imaginative portrait of the nihilists who planned and completed the murder of a Russian grand duke. Their first attempt failed because the bomb-thrower, Kaliayev, saw two children in the duke's carriage. He couldn't do it. Later he explains to his comrades, and one of them, Stepan, being tougher-minded, is not impressed by the reason. A woman of the group, Dora, exclaims:

> Open your eyes, Stepan, and try to realize that the group would lose all its driving force, were it to tolerate, even for a moment, the idea of children's being blown to pieces by our bombs.
>
> STEPAN: Sorry, but I don't suffer from a tender heart; that sort of nonsense cuts no ice with me. . . . Not until the day comes when we stop sentimentalizing about children will the revolution triumph, and we be masters of the world.
>
> DORA: When that day comes, the revolution will be loathed by the whole human race.
>
> STEPAN: What matter, if we love it enough to force our revolution on it; to rescue humanity from itself and from its bondage?
>
> DORA: And suppose mankind at large doesn't want the revolution? Suppose the masses for whom you are fighting won't stand for the killing of their children? What then? Would you strike at the masses, too?
>
> STEPAN: Yes, if it were necessary, and I would go on striking at them until they understood. . . . No, don't misunderstand me; I, too, love the people.
>
> DORA: Love, you call it. That's not how love shows itself.
>
> STEPAN: Who says so?
>
> DORA: *I* say it.
>
> STEPAN: You're a woman, and your idea of love is . . . well, let's say, unsound.
>
> DORA: (*passionately*) Anyhow, I've a very sound idea of what shame means.

Such questions and conceptions must have been in Dostoevsky's mind when he wrote that magnificent chapter, "Pro and Contra," which contains the legend of the Grand Inquisitor, in *The Brothers Karamazov.* Just before the Legend, Ivan is explaining to his pious and gentle brother, Alyosha, why he cannot believe in the justice of Alyosha's God. After telling about a brutish Russian general who set his dogs on an eight-year-old child because the boy had thrown a stone which lamed one of his hounds, he says to his brother:

> She [the boy's mother] dare not forgive him [the general]! Let her forgive him for herself, if she will. But the sufferings of her tortured child she has no right to forgive. . . . Is there in the whole world a person who would have the right to forgive and could forgive? I don't want harmony. From love for humanity I don't want it. I would rather be left with unavenged suffering. I would rather remain with my unavenged suffering and unsatisfied indignation, *even if l were wrong.* Besides, too high a price is paid for harmony; it's beyond our means to pay so much. And so I give back my entrance ticket, and if I am an honest man I give it back as soon as possible. And that I am doing. It's not God that I don't accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully return the ticket to Him "
>
> "That's rebellion," murmured Alyosha, looking down.
>
> "Rebellion? I am sorry you call it that," said Ivan earnestly. "One can hardly live in rebellion, and I want to live. Tell me yourself, I challenge you—answer. Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last. Imagine that you are doing this but that it is essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature—that child beating its breast with its fist, for instance—in order to found that edifice on its unavenged tears. Would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me. Tell the truth."
>
> "No, I wouldn't consent," said Alyosha softly.
>
> "And can you accept the idea that the men for whom you are building would agree to receive their happiness from the unatoned blood of a little victim? And accepting it would remain happy ever after?"
>
> "No, I can't admit it," said Alyosha.

No one has come close to improving on Dostoevsky's statement of the dilemma of what to do about the man-made evil in the world. All that he can add is contained in his story of the Grand Inquisitor, the moral of which is quite simply, Do no harm or evil, tell no lies, in the name of a far-off good. To the world and its multitudes, this has been the message of the Buddhas, the Christs, and the Gandhis. But the dispensers of "justice" think they know better. And they persuade us that they are right.

Years ago a woman who devoted many years of her life to the plight of children and young people in trouble with the law in Los Angeles wrote in an extraordinary book, *Youth in Conflict,* that those who try to help them soon stop talking about obtaining "justice." Justice is inaccessible, unavailable, and impossible to define. All their energies go into doing only one thing: the reduction—hardly the elimination—of *pain.* The word justice for them has lost its meaning. They don't argue about abstractions but try, in what ways are possible, to alter circumstances so that there will be a little less suffering in the world—less continuous pain for the victims of the grinding, impersonal, ruthlessly indifferent processes of the courts and the detention centers and the prisons. There is already a considerable literature devoted to such heroic efforts. A number of such works have been reviewed in MANAS—reviewed with a terrible sense of inadequacy, yet reviewed because it must be done.

All the questions raised in our present discussion are the result of the feelings aroused by such books and articles. And now we have another such work: A *Forced March to Nowhere,* subtitled *Homelessness:* A *National Priority Report,* prepared for the House Committee on the District of Columbia, and issued by the Community for Creative Non-Violence, 1345 Euclid Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20009.

This Report has three parts: A National Overview, The Local Perspective (in the Capital City), and The Failure of Deinstitutionalization. The authors say:

> Despite the local government's apparent acknowledgement of the problems of the homeless, thousands of people exist in this city with no homes and inadequate shelter space to take refuge from the heat and cold of the seasons. The city's assessment of the availability of shelter space for the homeless is inaccurate and misleading; its solutions are inadequate. People are suffering daily and dying from the lack of shelter.

In Washington the ills and symptoms of other cities around the country are intensified.

Washington has numerous fugitives from the deep South, and its present unemployment rate among minority youth is from 40 to 60 per cent. The closing of mental institutions has thrown many more people out into the streets, where they wander about in a daze. These people have no homes. Even counting them, until they turn up dead in an alley, is difficult. The writers say:

> We believe that the conditions and problems cited above are symptoms and expressions of a deeper malaise, which, in reality, reflects deep-seated changes and inadequacies in our society. We have built our nation on an economic value system that is rooted in competition and isolation, rather than cooperation and community. We are figuratively and literally exploding. Is it then any wonder that we are increasingly segregated, insulated, and separated? As we move away from our own center, we also move away from one another.

There are some figures in this report, but mostly it is an intimate account of the suffering of homeless people.

REVIEW
UNDYING MEMORIES

PUBLICATION of Kenneth Ring's *Life at Death—A Scientific Investigation of the Near-Death Experience* (Coward McCann & Geoghegan, $11.95) may possibly precipitate aggressive attack from the mechanistic wing of the scientific community, despite the unmistakable popularity of such reports, due largely to the work of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and Raymond Moody. A wide reading public is now convinced that the accounts of the psychological experiences of persons who almost die should be taken seriously. While evidence—if it is evidence—of this sort is simply not acceptable to the conventional scientific view, it keeps on piling up. There is now a question whether such research, in the course of the next ten or twenty years, along with parapsychological investigation, will end by being discredited, or the conventional scientific view itself will be gradually discarded. Dr. Ring—he has a Ph.D. in psychology and teaches at the University of Connecticut—believes his approach and evaluation of the near-death experience are scientific and has written his book to prove it. His broad conclusion, in his last chapter, is this:

> . . . near-death experiences are *not* uniquely associated with the moment of apparent death, that is simply one of the more reliable pathways to them. Instead, they seem to point to a higher spiritual world, and confer the possibility of a greater spiritual awareness for those who wish to nourish the seed that has been given. But one does not have to nearly die in order to feel the beginnings of spiritual insight. There are many paths leading to spiritual awakening and development. The people we have studied in this book all happened to have stumbled onto a common path, which some followed further than others. That is their way. What our way may be is for each of us to discern. But perhaps another lesson we can glean from the study of near-death experiences is to realize that there is indeed a higher spiritual dimension that pervades our lives and that we will discover it for ourselves in the moment of our death. The question is, however: Will we discover it in the moments of our lives?

Whether or not Dr. Ring is indeed "scientific" we leave to future controversy. Here we shall say simply that he means to be impartial, careful, precise (as precise as he can), and that he finds the testimony of his 102 subjects, most of whom went through the near-death experience within the past two years, deserving of an impartial hearing. He says in his Preface:

> My aim in conducting these interviews was to find out what people experience when they are on the verge of apparent imminent death. What they told me is, in a word, fascinating—as I think the material presented here will amply demonstrate—and for two quite distinct reasons. One has to do with the intrinsic content of these experiences themselves: No one who reads of them can come away without having been profoundly stirred—emotionally, intellectually and spiritually—by the features they contain. The other is if anything, even more significant: Most near-death experiences seem to unfold according to a *single pattern*, almost as though the prospect of death serves to release a stored, *common* "program" of feelings, perceptions, and experiences.
>
> What to make of this common set of elements associated with the onset of death is the central challenge of this book. Whether this experience—what I have called the core near-death experience—can be interpreted in naturalistic terms is the overriding scientific issue raised by the findings presented here. The meaning of the core experience, which obviously depends on its interpretation, is the major *metaphysical* question which must ultimately be addressed.

Not everyone who nearly dies reports having such colorful experience. But enough of them do to make the inquiry intensely interesting. And as Dr. Ring says, there does seem to be a "common" pattern for what these persons go through. While the imagery may vary, the underlying significance remains more or less the same. What, as the writer asks, does this mean?

But it must also be asked: Does acceptance of the subjective recollections of human beings as evidence of an experience "in some sense" objective violate the canons of scientific inquiry? This is also a basic question, relating to how we think, or ought to think, about an order of psychological experience. It has importance for deciding what we are able to regard as truth or knowledge, but of much greater interest, for most people, is an examination of the experience itself. What do the people who have it say?

A summarizing answer is provided by Dr. Ring in a quotation from Raymond Moody's *Life After Life*, which gives a generalized, composite account.

No one person went through *all* the common elements of the experience, but all together they supply this outline:

> A man is dying and, as he reaches the point of greatest physical distress, he hears himself pronounced dead by his doctor. He begins to hear an uncomfortable noise, a loud ringing or buzzing, and at the same time feels himself moving very rapidly through a long tunnel. After this, he suddenly finds himself outside his own physical body, but still in the same immediate physical environment, and sees his own body from a distance, as though he is a spectator. He watches the resuscitation attempt from this vantage point and is in a state of emotional upheaval.
>
> After a while, he collects himself and becomes more accustomed to his odd condition. He notices that he still has a "body," but one of a very different nature and with very different powers from the physical body he has left behind. Soon other things begin to happen. Others come to meet him and help him. He glimpses the spirits of relatives and friends who have already died, and a loving, warm spirit of a kind he has never encountered before—a being of light—appears before him. This being asks him a question, nonverbally, to make him evaluate his life and helps him along by showing him a panoramic, instantaneous playback of the major events of his life. At some point, he finds himself approaching some sort of a barrier or border, apparently representing the limit between earthly life, and the next life. Yet, he finds that he must go back to the earth, that the time for his death has not yet come. At this point he resists, for by now he is taken up with his experiences in the afterlife and does not want to return. He is overwhelmed by intense feelings of joy, love, and peace. Despite his attitude, though, he somehow reunites with his physical body and lives.
>
> Later he tries to tell others, but he has trouble doing so. In the first place, he can find no human words to describe these unearthly episodes. He also finds that others scoff, so he stops telling other people. Still, the experience affects his life profoundly, especially his views about death and its relationship to life.

All sorts of questions occur in connection with this report. In some cases the dying encounter what, by reason of religious belief, they *expected* to meet in death. Are, then, the elements of the experience projected forms of wish-fulfillment? It seems reasonable to say this about some of them, but the firm counsel to go back to life—to leave the cuddly environment in the protective arms of wise and devoted friends—reflects no sentimental longing. Instead, it makes good moral sense—the person is not done with life; he has not experienced death, but only come *near* it.

Perhaps people add their illusions to the core experience—after all, we do that with most of the experiences we have while alive. It seems clear, too, that the reports rely heavily on metaphor—the experience joins subtlety with intensity so that the words we ordinarily use can't tell about it. For example, a young woman among Dr. Ring's subjects, one who had a nearly fatal attack of asthma, related:

> I do remember thinking to myself that I was dying. And I felt I was floating through a tunnel. . . . When I say *tunnel*, the only thing I can think of is—you know, those sewer pipes, those big pipes they put in? It was round like that, but it was enormous. I couldn't really see the edges of it; I got the feeling that it was round. It was like a whitish color. I was just smack in the middle. My whole body, you know. I was lying on my back. I was just floating. And smoke or white lines or something were coming this way (toward her) and I was going the opposite way. (*What kind of feeling did you have as you were floating through this tunnel?*) Very peaceful, almost as if I were on a raft in the ocean, you know?

So she said "tunnel," as did most others, but the tunnel was only a concrete symbol, an inadequate one, for that aspect of the experience. Yet, at the same time, the feeling of a wonderful symmetry with life comes through in all these descriptions. What can we make of such reports?

Well, a great many people will refuse to ignore them as merely fanciful, and their thinking about death will be changed as a result. This is a major influence in our time, and it fits with numerous other transformations in thinking. The intellectual constraints of inherited materialism are losing their force.

The central question to be asked is perhaps this: Does thinking of a world in which immortality is a reality make that world a better place, and is that a sound reason for believing in immortality? On the other hand, is it ever good to fool yourself? But then, is there less reason to deny a life after death than there is to affirm it? What comment might "science" have to make on such questions? Do they represent the determinants of the actual course of human thinking and history, regardless of what "science" or scientists have to say?

COMMENTARY
NO UNFAMILIAR TYPE

WHILE the parallel drawn in this week's lead article (on page 2) between the proposed (and attempted) assassination of Hitler and a nihilist's willingness to destroy two children in order to kill a Russian grand duke may seem far fetched, we have only to think of today's multiplying assassinations to recognize what happens once this method of "solving problems" is approved and adopted. Killing people to get rid of the evil they do, or to punish them, often turns out to be a sowing of dragon's teeth. The Marxist revolutionists felt justified in slaughtering the Czar and his family, and doubtless other Russians of "noble" blood, but who has been able to count the millions who died at the hands of Stalin?

By contrast, Tom Paine tried to save Louis XVI from the guillotine, arguing that the thing to do was to send him to America as Louis Capet, where he would learn how to live in a society of equals. Martin Buber appealed to Israel not to execute Adolf Eichmann. Letting live even people guilty of the worst crimes sometimes leads to unexpected results, as in the case of Albert Speer, who was Hitler's Minister of Armaments and War Production. Speer's book has proved of profound interest to many readers, among them Daniel Ellsberg, for example, who was led to say (in *Papers on the War*):

> *Inside the Third Reich* is an amazing document, one that has no analogue, so far as I know, among the writings of any American associated with our current or past wars. What is most troubling about this book is to discover that the man who wrote it does not seem to be an unfamiliar type at all. The tone, the point of view, even much of the account of his life could be taken for that of any one of a number of our most respected officials.

Speer had written: "As the Nazi environment enveloped us, its evils grew invisible—because we were part of them." He also said: "There is, unfortunately, no necessary correlation between intelligence and decency; the genius and the moron are equally susceptible to corruption. . . . My moral failure is not a matter of this item and that; it resides in my active association with the whole course of events."

Not one jot or tittle of past crimes is erased by such searching self-discoveries, yet the world may be a little wiser for having them to consider. As people are drawn to think imaginatively about the consequences of what they do from day to day, the possibility of a change in "the whole course of events" begins to grow.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
JOHN HOLT'S WORK

THE spread of the idea of teaching children at home proceeds apace. No. 16 of John Holt's paper, *Growing Without Schooling*, begins with a progress report telling how the idea gets around, and of the increasing response of parents:

> The *Mother Earth News* article [quoted in MANAS for Sept. 10] appeared on schedule, and as I write this we have had over 600 responses: more than four hundred with subscriptions, and most of the rest with orders for books or samples. My article in *Psychology Today*, has brought in several telephone radio interviews. We've also had some nice response to Louise Andrieshyn's fine article in the latest issue of *Mothering*. . . .
>
> We have just sent out a follow-up mailing, including the front page of GWS #15 and our latest booklist, to all the thousands of people who expressed interest after the Donahue show. We thank the many volunteers all over the country who helped us with this mailing, which the three of us in the office could never have done ourselves. . .
>
> Nancy Wallace (NH) has an article on home schooling coming out in the Sept. issue of *Blair and Ketcham's Country Journal*. There will be a short interview with me in the Sept. issue of Boston magazine. And US *News and World Report* plans to have a section on home education in their Fall Education issue.
>
> My editor (and neighbor) and I are working hard on my unschooling book. It is too long—I have to cut 25% out. But every day's mail brings new material that I want to put *in*. Frustrating! We still don't have a definite title yet, when we do we'll let you know.

The same sort of "material" is printed in *Growing Without Schooling*, and No. 16 seems the biggest issue yet—20 pages of small print, although quite legible. This "home schooling" movement is a friendly affair, determined, yet not mad at anybody, although bureaucratic stubbornness may make it necessary to release a little steam, now and then.

The obstacles to teaching your children at home vary, depending on where you live. Some parents have had big court fights—with the good decisions and bad ones reported in GWS—while others have an easy time. A parental teaching certificate helps, but some states are easy to get along with anyway. Sometimes other problems loom so large that officials simply let "law-breaking" citizens who make truants of their children by teaching them at home go on doing it. A North Carolinan wrote to *GWS*

> . . . a friend of ours who is a teacher's aide with the Charlotte school system was attending a school meeting where someone from the District Attorney's office was the speaker. He noted that there were over 3000 truancy cases waiting to go to court. Since there is not space on the docket to deal with all these cases, they have simply been dropped! The Charlotte court system is only dealing with serious crimes as far as I know: murder, rape, burglary. Pornography is not considered a serious crime and has also been dropped, unfortunately. The city police, according to the official, are told that they can arrest the truants if they wish, but they must understand they will never go to court in the Mecklenburg County courts.

Another story in No. 16 deals with Learning Exchanges, in reply to some letters seeking such services. Holt comments:

> These readers are, in effect, suggesting a Learning Exchange by mail. As I guess most *GWS* readers know, a Learning Exchange (L.E.) is basically (1) a list of people who have ideas and skills that they are willing to share, and (2) another list of people who want to learn about various ideas and skills. Someone, A, knows about car repair, so that name goes to the Sharers file under Car Repair. Someone else, B, wants to learn about car repair, so that name goes in the Seekers file under Car Repair. Every so often someone matches the lists, tells the A's who know things and the B's who want to find out about those things how to get in touch with each other. It then is up to the individual people to find ways to get together.
>
> Most of these L.E.'s are locally based and work mainly by phone. The original and probably still largest L.E. is in Evanston, III.—we have mentioned it once or twice in *GWS*. I asked them a few years ago if they would be interested in listing people from outside Evanston, who could then get in touch with

each other by mail. They said No, perhaps because they had all they could do just to keep up with the demand in their own town.

But the idea of a mail L.E. is still a good one. Unfortunately, this is not a project that we can take on here at *GWS.* To keep up to date and publish the kind of skills directory described above would take more time and GWS space than we have. But it would be a wonderful project for one or more volunteers—perhaps a group of homeschoolers in one area—to take up. We could publish their address in every *GWS,* and people wanting to share or seek out skills could write directly to them. The group might some day publish their own L.E. directory, which people could order from them.

If any people or groups of people around the country are interested in taking on such a project, please let us know.

Holt publishes a lot of letters from parents, about their problems, solutions, and adventures. Here is one from a mother who took her baby to work with her:

I took my two-year-old daughter Meadow to work with me for six months last fall and winter while I worked in a natural foods store. I wasn't being paid very much so financially it worked out very well not to have to pay a babysitter, plus I don't like to leave my kids anywhere very long.

I think Meadow learned a lot about stores by spending a lot of time in one. She saw a lot of money and goods exchange, so learned a little bit about money. She would watch while I would count the money at the end of the day and would play with the pennies and "count" them too. Sometimes friendly customers would give her a penny of their change. Money still doesn't mean very much to her but she does have an idea what it's for.

Another thing she learned: what a scale is for. A lot of the products were in bulk, so I had to weigh them. She watched and one day started using an egg scale to weigh pieces of her puzzle or a cookie or a book or whatever she had on hand. She also liked to scoop out beans or flour or whatever into bags for me to weigh out.

I discouraged that a bit except when it was something we needed. Occasionally one of the customers would let her fill up their bags, which she enjoyed. I think an older child would learn a lot about the density of things—a scoop of raisins is heavier than sunflower seeds, for example. I know I learned a lot of stuff like that!

And of course she met a lot of people. She's still pretty shy with people at first, but she did learn about dealing with other adults and especially other little kids. Sometimes she would share her toys, sometimes she would give him/her an apricot from the bucket (chalk it up to overhead). We both met quite a cross-section of interesting people.

This happened in Oregon, where there must be some good stores and pleasant people.

No. 16 is a very rich issue of GWS. There are lots of "success stories" about teaching at home, and accounts of some really remarkable children. Holt prints an extract from his *Never Too Late* (a book about learning and playing the cello) on overcoming tone deafness in children. It just isn't true that some people are *really* tone deaf. We once knew a music teacher whose rule of life was *Every child can sing,* and he proved it throughout his career. It's a matter of learning how to *listen.*

There are also book reviews and the names of books Holt distributes because he thinks they are good. Of *The King Must Die* (Mary Renault) he says:

Living in mostly Christian times, we tend to look scornfully at the pagan classical religions. Even when I knew enough to take all religions seriously, I could not see how the pagan religions of the Greeks and Romans, with all their indifferent, capricious, cruel and vengeful gods and goddesses, could have been much use to them. But this book has not only made me see and feel pagan religion from the inside, but has made me understand how such a religion could sustain, guide, and even ennoble a man like Theseus, who took it seriously and lived by it. Indeed, it is easy to envy him the passionate strength of his belief.

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FRONTIERS

Gandhian Economics

[This article by a present-day Gandhian thinker, Ram Swarup, is made of extracts from his pamphlet, *Gandhian Economics—A Supporting Technology*, sponsored by the Appropriate Technology Development Association of Lucknow, India (5 Rupees), and available from Impex, India, 2/18, Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002, India.]

A GENUINE and healthy standard of consumption is achievable. An effective production system to realize that level of consumption is available without creating more problems than it solves. The first thing to do is to cut clear from the lure and temptation of the kind of economic production system that prevails in Western countries, a dialectified version of which is offered by Soviet Russia.

The first principle of a good production system is that it is not divorced from things of human consumption, but is related to them; that it is not autonomous and self-feeding. The present system of industrialism is productive in the sense that it produces many things. But those things are not related to essential consumption. They are there to feed the system itself. For example, one cannot help but be impressed by the hugeness of the London transport system, thanking the production system that has created it and has made it possible. But with a closer look one finds that eighty or ninety per cent of it is used up in taking people to and from their residences and places of work. In other words, the huge transport system does not represent the consumption needs of the community at all, but has to be there to support and feed the economic system that has created it. That is true about much of our present production—production which dazzles our eyes, but which is so little related to our consumption needs.

Because we have produced exchange-values, we think we have produced use-values. Because we have produced production goods we think we have produced consumption goods. We have a mode of production that needs long and expensive vocational training, and after we have provided that training, we call it education. Our mode of production creates slums, creates a city population divorced from any means of production, living on the sale of their labour from day to day, in the fear of unemployment, old age, sickness.

Things which should appear as costs of a particular system, appear by perverted measurement as its income and benefits. Keynes dimly perceived this when he said that total national expenditure of a nation is equal to its total national income. But instead of bemoaning this fact, he admired it. That is why, instead of suggesting a mode of production which would give us more income without incurring more costs, he taught us to incur more costs in order to have more income. Instead of telling us how to have more consumption goods, he told us how to have more production goods—Income through costs—that was his formula. It is possible, thanks to this system, for machines to multiply and consumer goods, including food, to decline both at the same time. Aldous Huxley expresses this point powerfully in *Ape and Essence: "Up* goes the spiral of industry, down goes the spiral of soil fertility. Bigger and better, richer and more powerful—and then, almost suddenly, hungrier and hungrier."

As it is possible for food to decline and cars and radios and money to increase, as has been happening in many Western countries, forcing them to live increasingly on imported food and raw materials, similarly it is possible for cars and radios and living accommodation and income moneys to decline, and coal and iron, tanks and tractors, offices and factories and investment money to multiply. These different processes are quite compatible. Up goes the spiral of production, down goes the spiral of consumption. There is no contradiction, no inconsistency, no incompatibility.

The second thing to remember is that a system can be productive in one sense at one level

and can be exploitive in another sense at another level, both simultaneously. There is no contradiction between the two in a world where things exist on multiple planes. Both these phenomena occur in the present industrial economy. Some things produced are cheap on the economic level, but are costly on the biotic and geologic levels—both intimately and permanently related to the welfare of man. This welfare is not expressible in money terms alone. But somehow we make the assumption that there are no costs except costs expressible in terms of money prices, and no welfare except a welfare which shows itself from moment to moment.

Today politicians and economists are not pursuing the end of a healthy level of consumption, but are pursuing a legendary, will-o'-the-wisp "standard of living" and "national income" which is not a measure of things healthily consumed and happily produced, but is a measure of services and commodities exchanged. For example, if people look at the sunset and enjoy it, sing and dance and are happy, and live in a smokeless atmosphere, there is no measurement to take these factors into account. But if they become professional painters, singers and actors working and singing for an income, production and income figures rise sharply, to the cheer and glow of the economist and the demagogue.

Traditional economics assumes that man is an economic being. As a consumer, his choices are informed by a hedonistic calculus; as a producer, his aim is to maximize profits. On these assumptions, traditional Economics builds up an intellectual apparatus which is both an interpretation as well as a justification of prevailing economics. In Gandhian thinking, man is more than an economic being. A man should have a lively sense of what is healthy, primary and useful, and what is merely pleasant and attractive. Gandhian Economics stresses community of interests, not conflicts. "Input" and "Factors of Production" are terms which do not kind favour in Gandhian thought. For these terms are too mechanical and smack of an exploitive spirit. We are participants and partners in a common venture. Gandhian Economics would like to create an economy in which we have use for one another's talents and contributions, and not an economy where the vast masses and their talents become redundant through impersonal, unknown market operations. We should not pollute the mother earth. We should not use up our soil and destroy our forests and foul our waters and exhaust in a few centuries wealth accumulated by nature over millennia. Gandhian Economics says that we should *work with renewable resources,* in a way that what we receive with one hand we give back with the other.

In Gandhian Economics, economic activity is informed by ethical considerations. A rich man is a trustee. He produces for all, not only for himself. He is rich by the amount he shares with others, not by the amount he amasses. But this sharing should flow out of the culture of the heart and the flowering of the soul, and not be dictated by a soulless bureaucracy or a Moloch State or a self-righteous Party. At the heart of Gandhian thinking is the small man, the man with his individual skill, capital and initiative. It is local production for local use with local resources. It is an economics of decentralisation, of independent workers. Not that it rules out large-scale production altogether, but it moves in the direction of small-scale production and decentralization. Its emphasis is not on corporate production, nor on State ownership, but on production by families and small groups in their own natural environment, working with their own resources and following their own rhythm of life.

RAM SWARUP