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A MORAL OR TWO

WE live in an age when the multiplying products designed to save us time and effort have become the enemy of the versatility and resourcefulness of human beings. To be "social"—that is, to take part in conventional activities such as having a job or a business, sharing common recreations, seeking the familiar "securities"—is virtual submission to the enemy. Two writers in particular have been pointing this out for years. Wendell Berry has shown what happened to farmers by reason of the "efficiencies" of factories in the field. Ivan Illich has described the dehumanization of peasants and ordinary folk, all over the world, because economists and businessmen, who deal in buying and selling, accept as real only what can be counted in money. Ours is a world in which buying is better than making, paying is better than sharing, and owning is better than living lightly. It is a world where transactions have been made to replace the spontaneities of friendliness and cooperation. Its stage management automatically casts many of the people we meet as salesmen on the make. The mood of having to be "on guard" eventually overtakes us all, even if watching, however covertly, for the shy decencies one longs for.

The decencies do not submit to accounting. They are not a marketable item and fade into frauds when marked with a price. Even the words which stand for the decencies have been corrupted. "Service" is a lubricant of selling, banks are said to be "friendly," and "counsel" is obtained only from consultants or therapists, who are of course well paid. In *The American Condition* (Doubleday), Richard Goodwin, tracing the loss of what he calls the "organic unities" which were once the moral foundation of pre-industrial life, summarizes the transformation of human relations:

> As money took on independent value, personal obligations could be fulfilled through payment—cash instead of services, gold instead of horses and bowmen. Deeply personal ties, which had extruded the consciousness of the age, a mode of thought, and a structure of values and perceptions, metamorphosed into commercial bonds. You no longer owed yourself; you owed money. The spirit of commerce gradually infiltrated extensive regions of social life which had not received the benefits of increasing wealth; ascendant beliefs overtook those who were still excluded from the new possibilities—who were still captive in the feudal relationships. This invasion came armed with the powerful, liberating idea of value. Once obligations had [monetary] value, once they could be priced, then the fact of payment overshadowed, and ultimately displaced, the identity of the debtor. The new kind of debt was impersonal, even transferable. Lordship over the land was no longer one of mingled strands in a web of personal obligations but something of calculable value whose earning, in short, could be used to pay taxes rather than homage. The lord who held the land became the owner. The earth was transmuted into capital, its produce into income, and income into goods—not only to maintain life but to bring comfort, pleasure, luxury, beauty. The powerful sought ownership in addition to power and, finally, as a source of added power.

In such a society, everything you want or need has a money value. It even costs money to visit your friends—you have to have a car and buy gas. We don't live in villages any more, where practically everything important was within walking distance, and going to the city, involving a long trip, was an adventure instead of a job requirement. The good life of a century ago is now a life of penury and want. Look at a modern kitchen, count the things you have to have just to cook a meal. Everyone except a few hermits is locked into the system of dependence on elaborate devices with which you can do only one thing, and these, if powered, as most gadgets are these days, link you to the economic fortunes and power plays of the Middle East, to say nothing of the strip

miners and the argument about nuclear energy. Think of all the plumbing involved in getting a drink of water! (And in Los Angeles having water in the pipes required burglary from Owens Valley farmers.) Some of us can remember a childhood when all you did for a drink was take a pail and walk to the well, and let the bucket down.

Well, we probably wouldn't even think of such things if our present arrangements weren't becoming more and more difficult to bear. The fact is that our efficiencies have tied us hand and foot. Not all of them are bad, of course; it is the choice and the management of what we choose that makes the trouble. The comparison shows up best, perhaps, in agriculture. According to current figures, the wet-rice-growing Chinese peasant spends one calorie of human energy to harvest fifty calories of energy in food, while the big farmer on his tractor has to use six calories (six to twenty) of motive power to produce one calorie in his crop.

. . . Yet we are not really impressed. The trouble is, the Chinese peasant lives the life of a peasant and we can't imagine doing that. So the comparison remains ecological campaign rhetoric, handy for quoting but not for acting on. Or is this still so?

Well, we say, the Chinese peasant had better stay in China, where he can survive and even thrive. Transport him to the American Middle West and his superlative gardening skills would hardly keep him alive. One-man production operations have little survival value in Kansas. There is something profoundly wrong with this. But we're not Chinese, someone might say; perhaps we were made for better things.

Yet even medium-sized American farms are suffering describable loss, and the farmers aren't surviving as farmers, but as something else. Telling about a family in the Corn Belt in Iowa, Mark Kramer says in *Three Farms* (Atlantic-Little, Brown):

> If laborsaving technology and the world of big business have removed from Mary Jane the possibility of filling an urgent on-farm position, they threaten to do the same with Joe. More and more of his farming time is taken in managing costly inputs. Unlike farmers, managers are made, not born. They are interchangeable. They substitute regularity for wit, usual procedure for adventurousness, dutifulness for competitiveness, and obedience to policy for independence. They replace skill with system and accept corporate goals in place of goals that express personal spirit. In short, what farmers do, and what managers can't do by definition, is exercise craft.
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> Loss of craft in farming is serious, not just to farmers, but to the nation. It is the step before loss of pride, loss of personal ethics in trade, loss of stewardship of the land, loss of concern for quality of product. The loss reverberates all the way down the food supply chain. It can be felt at McDonald's, and in the aisles of supermarkets. It is part of a grander loss yet, the dying of a system of people making money doing things well. Supplanting the old system is a new one with slots for people to do what is prescribed. If farm women face a world that is sexist, farm people in general also face a world that is increasingly anti-individualist. If women count for little, so do we all, and the fights that Joe and Mary in particular face are struggles against the same corporate and technological forces that trouble us all.

They trouble us, but not enough. Loss of craft may be an inner privation but it's not the bottom line. Joe and Mary Jane are still making a fair living. And what else can they do but "adapt"? That, really, is the question we set out to raise in this discussion—not to answer but to present.

The hard reality of the situation is that you have to be—or try to be—some kind of Spartan hero in order not to "adapt." You have to look for a particular place—or trade or profession—where survival and usefulness are both possible with a minimum of compromise. People who do this sometimes succeed through sheer ingenuity and combining two or three things they know how to do. It is possible to beat the system, never completely, but enough to keep the decencies alive. One thinks of Scott Nearing, still farming in Harborside, Maine, at the age of ninety-seven. He

does about as well at it, now, as he did years ago when no one except a handful of radicals had ever heard of him. Today his functional asceticism is a legend, his practice—his and his wife Helen's—an example to the world. In short, life is possible without adapting to what you don't believe in, even if it is difficult. Of course, it wasn't so difficult for Scott Nearing, but the only thing to do. Difficulty is largely, not entirely, a matter of definition. Some of our difficulties might seem opulent grandeur to an Eskimo—a nineteenth-century Eskimo.

Sometimes refusing to adapt involves you in curious mixtures. Louis Bromfield, who became a model farmer during the first half of this century, combined organic farming with writing novels—very successful ones. He had the money to go into farming—which he loved—in the right way. (See his books, *Malabar Farm* and *Pleasant Valley.*) He would sell the film rights on one of his stories to Hollywood and build a new barn with the money, naming the barn after the picture or, maybe, MGM. Wendell Berry, who began life as a college professor teaching English, became—or remained—a farmer in Port Royal, Kentucky, combining the culture of the soil with the culture of words—words explaining why it's better not to adapt and about the decencies which are salvaged by this refusal. He writes poetry and books, and articles about many things—about potatoes grown in the mountains of Peru, about the virtues of native grasses, and about the circumstances in which it's better to farm with horses than a tractor. He also writes about literature and the writer's art, as in "Standing by Words" in the Winter 1980-81 *Hudson Review.*

There is quite plainly a law of diminishing returns in the application of technical efficiencies. A point is reached where you have to work night and day to afford all the efficiencies which give you the time to earn night and day. As time passes, efficiencies which began as semi-luxuries become practical necessities. Then the price for them starts going up. And how many, these days, are able to walk or ride a bicycle to work?

Of course, in an article like this we should be talking more about the people who manage—like the Marines?—to do the impossible. There are those who figure out a way to make a living at home. Fine craftsmen sometimes develop a mail-order business, writers, too—Scott Nearing is one example, John Holt another. But if postal rates keep going up, only the caterers to the mass market will be able to afford mail-order costs. Obviously, more and more ingenuity will be required. Honorable failure may be inevitable for some. (The odds are for failure.) Eventually the costs of mass marketing may equal and then exceed a selling price that ordinary people can afford. First the little companies will go out of business, then the medium-sized ones, and finally the big ones. This process is already on the way, as statistics-watchers know. Inflation only hurries the process, making us realize sooner what is happening.

We can take the Manas Publishing Company as an example, because it is handy and we know how it works. MANAS is a *very* small enterprise with just three subsistence paid employees, the rest volunteers. As a result of the last postal rate increase, about three months ago, it now costs the price of a single issue for postage to mail one sample copy of the paper. "Promotion" of the familiar sort—supposing we wanted to attempt it, which the publishers don't—is out of the question. And they learned more than thirty years ago that the readers we have are the best source of names of prospective readers. So we ask for names, and then send people samples. We can't "talk" like salesmen about what MANAS tries to do—say, to preserve and enlarge the "decencies"—but we don't mind showing around a product that is meant to be read. We don't buy mailing lists because we don't permit ours to be used for any purpose except sending out the magazine—on the theory that having the names and addresses of subscribers is a trust, not a resource to sell or use

as we like. We are now limiting sample copies to one to a prospect, instead of the three we've been sending out since the beginning. Maybe that will be enough to invite a subscription from those who enjoy or value a paper of this sort.

Another example of the squeeze affecting small enterprise comes under the heading of the cost of equipment. Apart from printing, which MANAS buys at the market price—and which naturally keeps going up—the Manas Publishing Company owns three power-run machines: an electric typewriter, a plate-making machine, and an addressing machine. The copies are wrapped by hand (machinery for this would cost many thousands of dollars) and then run through the addresser, which prints the names and addresses on the wrappers. This year, our thirty-fourth of publishing, the little old addressing machine wore out and we had to buy another one (rebuilt, but good) of a "more efficient" sort. It helps our volunteers a lot to have it, although it cost nearly a quarter of the annual gross income of the paper from subscriptions. The man who installed and got it going for us—a friendly craftsman who has been doing this work for decades—mused about his services in years past. He could remember when the company charged $3.40 an hour for his time. "Now," he said, "they get $70." It made him—and us—a bit miserable.

Is there any way out? Not that we know of. If you want to reach people with what you have to say you have to use the mails. For addressing, a machine is necessary. The moral: Get big or bust. The moral: Going bust may be better than getting big. More moral: Going bust may be a way of starting afresh in another area where subsistence and self-support and convivial relationships are still possible or comma into being.

Well, this is not an urgent cry for help. MANAS is not in deep trouble (just the ordinary kind), but as part of the society whose tendencies affect us all, it will be, some day. Our little problems make handy illustrations of the squeezing process affecting small, autonomous enterprise, especially non-profit enterprise which by definition and intention cannot substitute "obedience to policy for independence." Moreover, a third of a century may be a long enough life for a paper which works for the ends MANAS works for. (See box on page 4.) With the broad decentralization of population, economic processes, and power that the future is bound to require, other modes of communication will certainly appear, with numerous local centers of dreaming and thinking, and a greater variety of expression. So much for that.

There is another moral: Manage to get big and you'll have a bigger bust, a little later. That kind is a bust without dignity. You change your ways, but only because you must. For the world, you could name it Survival for a little while longer; or, if you wanted to sing it, Waiting for the Bottom Line.

However prematurely, our society is getting old. This is nothing to be sad about, unless you think that getting old is something to be sad about. The need to get old is inscribed in every structure in the universe, so that *not* getting old would be something to worry about. The Wandering Jew did not have a very good time.

In the economy of Life, getting born and being young supply the natural balances to getting old. The one encouraging thing about the present is the prosperity we have in new beginnings. But, someone will say, they are all so small, so weak, so inconspicuous! Well, in the last century, the story goes, Michael Faraday showed his dynamo to the Prime Minister of England, who looked at it, saw it work, and then said to the inventor, "Very interesting, but what good is it?" Faraday replied, "What good is a new-born

So with the innovations—communitarian, cultural, metaphysical—of the present. Their presence is not announced in any of the graphs. Being about ninety-five per cent imagination and inspiration, they are practically weightless and will continue to be until the ideas now proving out in practice are more widely adopted and acquire

"statistical significance." If you want to know something about the future, don't consult the actuaries of the status quo. Jules Verne and Edward Bellamy, both romancers of sorts, were far better prophets than the economists of their time. Let the statisticians define the problems, but don't go to them for solutions. They are not in the solution business, and furthermore it is not, and will never be, a business. The right solution is often in some sense going out of business, and you wouldn't apply to businessmen for help in that.

The people who are now playing a part in generating the future do not measure either their efforts or their possibilities by looking at statistics. They are more like artists than entrepreneurs. Their motivation is simple enough. They couldn't stand the way things were going and decided to do something else. Bits of biography about John Todd, Wendell Berry, and E. F. Schumacher would make fascinating reading for youngsters with the same dissatisfactions and a hunger to be a useful part of change. Such enterprises begin with an inside feeling about the fitness of things. Then, because the end of thought is an act, the feeling takes on form, and the form, being visible, inspires delight and respect. Then the writers—journalists and essayists—get busy. A few philosophers become engaged. Papers like *Rain, CoEvolution, Resurgence, Self-Reliance,* and *New Roots* are started and gain circulation. Myth mingles with reality, which is inevitable, and even good and necessary. No real historical rebirth ever took place without the animation of myth, even though the pain of immature interpretations is a heavy burden for enthusiasts weak in reality-testing. This is not an avoidable cost of innovation but a natural cost of all living, as we are presently constituted. Shattered illusions make compost for the growing of common sense, and the art of recycling is already one of the promising skills of our time.

The day of pioneers and trail-breakers is not over, but just beginning, for the age which lies ahead. To say that what the modern world needs is a few good funerals is not a macabre joke but an expression of uncommon sense. The nation-state needs a funeral. Anyone can see that its life is now confined to spasmodic twitching, its mentality good only for bemoaning its wounds and numbering its foes. What else do you read in the paper these days? The acquisitive society needs a funeral, too, but that can't come for a while—until, that is, not enough goods are left for people to survive in their accustomed way.

A great many humans are ready in their minds to read about other things—the good things happening and the experiments on the way. Others are ready in their backs and arms to make new beginnings. Those are the human figures we can count on. They have nothing to do with the bottom line.

REVIEW
THINKABLE OR UNTHINKABLE IDEAL?

SOME weeks ago, in a discussion here of Horace Alexander's *Gandhi Through Western Eyes*, we spoke of books by and about Gandhi. We mentioned the series of volumes of Gandhi's writings issued as *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* by the Government of India, published from year to year, remarking that readers seeking to understand what Gandhi stood for and thought would have to be selective in their choice of reading him, since his works will eventually total about ninety volumes.

Since then three more volumes—75, 76, and 77—have arrived, and we have been browsing in them. The contents, arranged chronologically, contain about everything that has been set down, one volume covering about six months (or more) of a year. No. 75, for example, provides what he wrote or said from Oct. 11, 1941 to March 31, 1942, and 76 runs from April 1 to Dec. 17, 1942. There are letters, reports of talks, and material he wrote for publication. Some of the letters contain personal counsel to his friends and co-workers. Others deal with the issues of the time, usually the war in Europe and how it was affecting India and the cause of India's freedom. Dipping into these volumes brings the reader into contact with Gandhi's life in the round, reflecting the day-to-day thinking and action of a man of coherent and unified purpose, for whom normal life was not distinguished from working for a cause.

In May of 1942 a large group of boys and young men came to talk to Gandhi at Sevagram. One question was "How can we drive away the British from here?" Gandhi joked by saying that they could use *lathis*—wooden rods or staffs reinforced with iron used by the British police to beat down crowds of demonstrators. He said that he knew how to wield a lathi, but he used it only as a staff, for support, not for striking others. He invited them to consider this use. Then he asked the boys whether they wanted to drive the British away or end their domination. They said, "End their domination."

Gandhi replied:

> That is the correct attitude. I have many friends among Englishmen. But I cannot say that about all Englishmen though I would like to be friends with all of them. . . .
>
> There are two ways of getting rid of imperialism: either we wipe out the Empire or we quit it. I have suggested a method of quitting it. For that we do not require lathis; the two things required are knowledge that the domination is a greater evil than any other evil and that we have to get rid of it no matter what it may cost. We have to be masters of our own mind. Take me for an example. I do not feel I am a slave of anyone. Even if the whole world tries to make me a slave, it will fail. It cannot make me a slave, that is to say, it cannot become the master of my mind. It can do whatever it may like with my body. Suppose someone asks me to pick up this stick and keep it there. No doubt I have the strength to lift the stick but I do not want to submit to his bidding. He would instruct the police to beat me to death. I will submit to his beating but not to his bidding. I am the master of my mind. A man is not a slave as long as he does not submit to others. I would have done my work if I was beaten to death. That would be my complete victory because he would not have made me do what he wanted.

Someone may say, but that isn't natural! The question is—natural to what or to whom? It was natural for Gandhi because he made it so. He, you could say, believed in the law of self-preservation, like the rest of us. But first he asked, what is the self to be preserved? Is it body or mind? Gandhi believed it to be the mind. His body could be defeated or destroyed, but not his mind. He was invulnerable at this level.

Think of what a population that had adopted Gandhi's idea of independence would be like! But that, someone will say, is impossible! And the answer is, How do you know? Well, it takes too long, or would! And the answer might be, What else, for a conquered people, is worth attempting? That was Gandhi's view of the matter.

Year by year Gandhi's argument gains strength from the course of events. If you say it is

"natural" to take counter action of violence against an oppressor or enemy, then it will be natural for the enemy to improve his weapons. And so on, back and forth. We used to say that we'd got as far as poison gas, but now we have the Bomb—a weapon of immeasurable power which, when used, makes no distinction between the guilty and the innocent—supposing anyone can tell the difference. Decision about the Bomb can no longer "naturally" be by the War College. More civilians are killed in modern war than soldiers. So the civilians must have the deciding voice, if we are to talk about what is "natural"!

Why don't the civilians make themselves heard so that the nuclear bombs will be destroyed or put away, buried somewhere so that we can forget them, if there is such a hiding place? Because, with our sort of social organization, people have stopped thinking about nearly everything but making money, getting ahead. So the experts in violence are allowed to make the decisions, and the people, having an unhealthy respect for experts—a problem we are only now learning to correct—go along.

But they like it less and less.

That is why individuals like Gandhi are needed by the world. He teaches thinking about the real freedom of the human being. He said to that youthful audience:

> We have to intensify our determination about not submitting to the rulers' bidding. Is that very difficult? How can one compel others to become one's slaves?

Now he complicates the issue—as he should—by turning to the forms of unconscious enslavement:

> The authority of the Empire is exercised on us in a very subtle way—it is so subtle that we hardly know the Empire exists. What proof do the Sevagram peasants have about the existence of the Government except the presence of the local Patel? There wouldn't be any proof if there were no Patel armed with administrative authority. Peasants are afraid of the Patel. To them the Empire is an invisible power. The means of exercising this power are very subtle. We cannot get out of it with the help of the lathi. We can be victorious if we do not submit to the lathis of others.

He looks at the wider theater of action:

> Two forces of the same type are ranged against each other at present. Violence is being practiced between England, America, China and Russia on one side and Germany, Italy and Japan on the other side. All these nations are intelligent, powerful and prosperous. A dangerous war is being fought between them. No one knows who will win. At the present moment there is mutual destruction of life and property. The worst of it is that it is not only the combatants who are being killed but innocent children, old men and women too. I am not interested in such war. It is the grace of God that we do not have such strength. I do not even want such favour from Him. I do not want to become either a Hitler or a Churchill. I for my part would like to become an independent peasant of India but I have not succeeded so far. I need milk while he cannot get milk. My body cannot subsist without milk. I wish I could compete with him. I envy him.
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> But the peasant of India is a peasant by force of circumstances. He for his part would like to become a king. But by force of circumstances he has remained a peasant. I wish to become a peasant and labourer by choice. The only difference between him and me would be that I would be satisfied with my lot while he is not. I do not wish to become a dissatisfied peasant like him. I would be master of myself. I would be happy with that life. That is my ideal.
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> On the day I am able to teach him to become a peasant and labourer by choice I would have taught him to throw off the shackles that now keep him bound and that compel him to do the masters' bidding.
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> I have just pointed the way. You will get guidance from that.

The way to what? To freedom from imperialism—what he is talking about. What is for us a very complicated thing involving high weapons technology and all that goes with it was for him a very simple thing: Change the ends of your life. Gandhi's life became a demonstration of the validity of this solution.

Gandhi kept saying, *"You can do it!"* You are a human being with godlike potentialities. He

sounded as if he believed it, and he did. He didn't explain very often that it might take centuries or even millennia. But he said that the difficulty of doing something is not a reason for doing something else which is wrong and in the long run self-defeating. There were moments when Gandhi showed he was as much of a "realist" as any of his critics. Asked about nonviolence after freedom for India had been gained, he said in the pages of *Harijan:*

> . . . I am trying to represent the spirit of India as I conceive it. It is and will be a mixture. What policy the National Government will adopt I cannot say. I may not even survive it, much as I would love to. If I do, I would advise the adoption of non-violence to the utmost extent possible and that will be India's great contribution to the peace of the world and the establishment of a new world order. I expect that with the existence of so many martial races in India, all of whom will have a voice in the government of the day, the national policy will incline toward militarism of a modified character. I shall certainly hope that all the effort for the last twenty-two years to show the efficacy of non-violence as a political force will not have gone in vain and a strong party representing true non-violence will exist in the country. In every case a free India in alliance with the Allied powers must be of great help to their cause, whereas India held in bondage as she is today must be a drag upon the war-chariot and may prove a source of real danger at the most critical moment.

Was Gandhi here compromising on his principles? Not at all. His first principle was not non-violence, but truth. He wanted each one to do what he thought was right. The violent need freedom to be violent. Gandhi will oppose violence, but, non-violent action is effective only when chosen voluntarily. This meant that for Gandhi making day-to-day decisions on policy for himself and his movement was like walking a razor's edge. That didn't trouble him, since he saw this need for continual moral choice as the essential human condition, to be *embraced* as the true meaning of life. That was the kind of "evolution" which Gandhi regarded as natural for man. The Promethean mission was "normality" for him. His example, as revealed in his *Collected Works,* might prove an inexhaustible source of material for self-education for the readers who decide to take seriously his unashamedly heroic ideal.

COMMENTARY
TRIBUTE TO AN ARTIST

THE humanizing influences we enjoy and seek out are all too few. We found one recently, by the usual way—word of mouth. It is the film titled *From Mao to Mozart*, which lasts an hour and a half and is making the rounds of the medium-price movie theaters. The star is Isaac Stern, a virtuoso on the violin who, a couple of years ago, went with his accompanist, David Golub, and his family for a visit to China. He played for the Chinese people, and their talented young people played for him. The picture is a delight from beginning to end.

There is focus in what you see in any audio-visual medium, and therefore "distortion," since you see some things and not others. But this is true of any work of art, is the essence of any artistic achievement. If the artist has vision and a sense of responsibility, you welcome his focus, no matter what the necessary limitations. So with Isaac Stern, a cherubic hobbit of a man who plays the violin like an angel.

The Chinese propagandists get in their licks, but it doesn't matter. Stern meets this doctrinaire dullness with grace and humor. And there is some truth in the current line, so why not let them say what they have to say? Anyway Stern makes Mozart reduce ideological argument to a cipher.

The real content of the picture is Stern's music and the Chinese people. They love it and him. No doubt the very best music students in all China play for him. They have conscientiously learned how to play with excellent technique. They read the notes, stroke their bows, and there is good sound. In the film Stern gives them little lessons to show the difference between technique and music. He plays as they play, then shows how to make the melodic line tingle and swell. They play their own instruments for him—stringed affairs most of us have never seen or heard. Then there are dancing Chinese acrobats and other marvels, besides good shots of the landscape, the rivers, mountains, and rice fields, and, of course, that great big wall.

The children, the young girls, the teachers, the audiences, the tumult and the total attention to Stern's playing—the revelation of the artist at work, giving, giving to others—and the humanness of it all: the picture is a surging wonder. Be sure to see and hear it.

The next issue of MANAS will be dated September 2.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION

WHEN Arthur Morgan revived Antioch College back in the early 1920s, he explained to the faculty that he thought a school of higher education should serve the needs and interests of the community where the teachers lived and taught. He asked the professors of physics and chemistry to give some thought to small industries that might be established in Yellow Springs, Ohio, where the college was located. As a result, a number of useful enterprises were begun. Morgan wrote about these ventures in *Industries for Small Communities.* What was accomplished made Yellow Springs a better place for living. The attractions of the big city were not so great for people who had good jobs and interesting work.

In a chapter on the size of community industries, Morgan wrote.

> If the genius of America had been more generally directed to discovering and achieving the optimum size of industry rather than the maximum size, it is strongly probable that the structure of industry and the distribution of population would now be very different. If conscious study had habitually been made as to what are the basic needs and desires of men, and of the ways in which these needs and desires could best be met in communities of human dimensions, it probably would have been possible to combine wide distribution of population, and in many more fields decentralization of industry, with a high order of well-being. Not only "it would have been possible," but it is still possible to the extent that a clear mental picture exists as to what is desirable and possible.

A "clear picture" of the potential for energy self-sufficiency in a small New England town was the goal of a project undertaken by some students of Hampshire College. The result of their investigations appeared in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* for March, in an article by the students (now graduated), and their physics teacher, Allan S. Krass. The writers begin:

> Sudden and unpredictable reductions in the supply of oil and the rapid rise of energy prices have had devastating effects on the economies of small cities and towns in the United States, especially in New England. The small cities are dependent on the major utilities for their energy supply, and as long as they remain so, they seem destined to take a back seat to the needs and demands of the big metropolitan areas.
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> It was in this context that we decided to explore the implications of a decentralized self-sufficient energy strategy for Northampton, Massachusetts, a city of 30,000 people on the west bank of the Connecticut River. Much of what we learned can be generalized to many other small cities of similar size and constitution, both in New England and in other regions.

The money spent by a city for imported energy *leaves* the city, and 80 per cent of Northampton's energy comes from oil—used for heating, as vehicle fuel, and to generate electricity. The proposals of the students—covering conservation, hydropower, conversion of solid wastes, and development of woodlands for additional fuel—seemed so well researched and thought out that their full report (summarized in the *Bulletin*) has been published by the U.S. Department of Energy. Of interest here is the response of the community, with which the report concludes:

> The creation of a municipal utility to supply energy is certainly not viewed very favorably by the major private utilities which now supply cities like Northampton with their electricity and natural gas. It could, however, be the local oil distributors who would play an important role in the transition to a municipal utility or even to the operation of neighborhood energy cooperatives based on solar ponds. With oil sales dropping, many dealers are diversifying into conservation and alternative energy equipment. This could provide a part of the infrastructure of a future municipal energy system. Other ideas which are under active consideration are insulation cooperatives, credit unions and an energy development corporation.
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> Our investigation of the potential for local energy self-sufficiency in Northampton has had some surprising results. We began the study as an academic exercise, mainly to explore the implications

of decentralization. Even after seeing the real potential for local self-reliance, we were hesitant to present our ideas to the people and officials of the city, assuming we would be dismissed as utopian academics, or worse.

Our experience has been totally the opposite of our expectations. Three of the authors . . . have spent three months describing the results of our investigation to a wide variety of civic and fraternal groups, business organizations and educational institutions in the city. They have also discussed the plan with the County Planning Board, the City Council and the Mayor's Alternative Energy Committee.

All of these groups have been highly receptive to the general idea of greater self-sufficiency and quite able to appreciate its potential benefits. Political activity on energy matters has increased dramatically, and the general level of knowledge and understanding of energy issues in the community is growing rapidly, just as it is in cities all over the country. We have seen ample evidence of the truth of Amory Lovins' statement: "Soft energy systems have an obvious relevance to everyday life because they are both physically and conceptually closer to end uses." It is this "obvious relevance to everyday life" of the system we have suggested which has made it so well received by the people of Northampton and so highly promising of ultimate achievement.

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The best brief treatment of world food supply that we have seen is the pamphlet issued by the Institute for Food and Development Policy (2588 Mission St., San Francisco, Calif. 94110)—*Exploding the Hunger Myths.* It has 32 pages and the writers are Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins, authors of the now famous *Food First.* This book should be in every school library, and the pamphlet part of every "Social Studies" syllabus.

Five "myths" are examined in the pamphlet, the first being the assumption that "People are hungry because of scarcity." The writers say:

What really explodes the myth that scarcity is the cause of hunger is the fact that enough food is being produced even in countries where so many are forced to go hungry.

In India, while millions starve, soldiers patrol the government's 16 million tons of "surplus" grain. In the Sahelian countries of West Africa even during the much-publicized drought and famine of the early seventies, surveys by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, squelched by displeased aid-seeking governments, documented that each Sahelian country, with the possible exception of mineral-rich Mauritania, actually produced enough grain to feed its total population. In Mexico, where at least 80 per cent of the children in rural areas are undernourished, livestock (much of it raised for export to the United States, consume more basic grains than the country's entire rural population.

In Bangladesh, one of the world's most densely populated countries, enough grain is produced to provide, theoretically, each person with more than 2600 calories a day. Yet over half the families in Bangladesh daily consume less than 2500 calories per person, the bare minmum necessary. Following the 1974 floods, millions in Bangladesh perished. But they did not die because of scarcity. One Bangladeshi describes what happened in her village: "A lot of people died of starvation here. The rich farmers were holding rice and not letting any of the poor peasants see. . . ." Asked whether there was enough food in the village, she replied. "There may not have been a lot of food, but if it had been shared, no one would have died.". . .

Hunger is real; scarcity is not.

Why are so many people going hungry? The basic reasons are two: ignorance and lack of responsibility. Making the young aware of the facts—that choice of crop by landowners and indifference to the brutal reality of hunger are the cause of malnutrition and starvation—makes assumption of responsibility at least possible. This pamphlet helps to put an end to ignorance about world food supply, removing the barrier to normal feelings of responsibility.

FRONTIERS

About Establishments

WE have an acquisitive and increasingly self-destructive society and there are times when even its excellences seem like flowers of evil . . . and yet, there are other times when something comes through that should be singled out for praise and appreciation. We are thinking of the *New Yorker,* which we can't help but admire for its editorial quality, even though it exists by reason of all those insidiously clever ads. To get to the point, "Talk of the Town" for April 6 begins:

> There seems to be no end to the amount that the world can learn from the Poles. Through the actions of the Solidarity movement, they have refreshed the spirit of freedom everywhere. In them, liberty has flowed from its deepest and purest source: the direct will of millions of people to live and act together honorably and peacefully, unconstrained by the fear, suspicion, deception, secrecy, brutality, and general demoralization that pervades society under totalitarian rule—and, in this case, foreign-sponsored totalitarian rule at that. In opposing a Marxist state, they have given an unexpected confirmation of Marx's theory that the workers themselves could organize and take charge of their destinies. Even the withering away of the state—a Marxist theory never before confirmed anywhere—is occurring (or anyway has begun to occur) in Poland. Although they do not call themselves revolutionaries, what they have accomplished—a transformation of society at the molecular level, with an apparently irreversible change in the life and spirit of a whole people—goes far deeper than the accomplishments of most of the insurrections guerrilla actions, and coups instigated by those who do call themselves revolutionaries. And by their restraint the members of Solidarity have added a hopeful new chapter to the story of non-violence, for this is the first time that this mode of action has been used to telling effect against a totalitarian adversary. Whereas many other rebellious movements of our era have pursued noble ends with inhuman, or even criminal, means, Solidarity's means and ends have been one. Its members have fought for tolerance by being tolerant, they have fought for the truth by telling the truth; and they have gained freedom by practicing freedom.

This is a level of comment that we'd like to see appear more often in the radical and pacifist press. Even if what is said can be picked at—as can practically everything in anything as complicated as mass action—a profile of moral significance and achievement emerged and became evident to the *New Yorker* writer, and he, like other staff members of that paper, was equal to putting it into appropriate words.

This calls for a few other words in appreciation of the Establishment, which has its good side as well as its indecent side, that usually gets the most attention. The Establishment is the creation of a comparatively small number of opinion-makers whose views prevail at a given moment of history. They have their notions of culture and human good along with prudent and bankerish attitudes about policy. They keep the universities going—such as they are—and, like a great many managers, have a fair stock of common sense. They preserve the conventions—good ones along with others not so good—and follow tradition until obliged by circumstances—pressures are more effective than reason—to submit to change. An establishment is the guardian of the status quo. A good establishment tends to be free from fears of revolution, willing to listen to if not to accept intelligent criticism, and is aware that some day it will have to change, even though it hopes to put change off for as long as possible. An establishment willing to tolerate fellows like Cicero or William O. Douglas is a pretty good one. (Cicero lasted quite a while before political enemies killed him, and the attempt to impeach Douglas failed.)

Another way of thinking about an establishment is comparing it to a tree—the firm stature, that is, of a tree. What holds a tree up is its dead wood. Without its strength the other functions of the tree—ecologically many—could not be performed. So you could say that even the part that is no longer growing has a function—it holds things together and gives support to the tender cambium layer where the growing takes place. So with society. If the daring and

imaginative workers for change couldn't get any kind of job we'd soon have a totalitarian society.

The important thing for the health of an establishment is not to allow itself too much complacency. A conceited establishment rewards mediocrity and demands that originality be ignored if not suppressed. This almost always results from the elevation of bureaucratic minds to areas of decision. Armed with power, bureaucracy becomes routine tyranny. Years ago frightened establishment people used to talk about "creeping socialism." Their aim was bad. The prevailing defect—the inevitable vulnerability of every complex technological society—is in the monstrously large and growing organization required to minister to its multiplying needs and manage its increasingly unwieldy functions. So, "creeping bureaucracy" would be a better target for criticism. So far as we know, only the decentralists have a remedy, and the modern welfare, warfare state is not about to adopt it.

In such a period of history, there is a great deal of clutching at straws, while the voices of intelligent critics grow stronger and stronger. A decent establishment learns how to bend when it must. It may not bend enough—what group jealous of its power does?—but bending a little is better than putting its critics in jail, as happened, say, in Russia a generation ago, when the curious biological theories of Lysenko were adopted by the Communist leadership and bureaucracy, probably because they seemed to parallel Party doctrine, leading to the ostracism of the distinguished Mendelian geneticist, Nicoli Vavilov, who apparently died in a camp or a prison because Gregor Mendel was a bourgeois foreigner. But here in America, the Department of Agriculture, after snubbing "organic" gardeners and farmers for many years, decided to look into what they were doing and saying, and made a favorable report.

This is no *carte blanche* apology for the Establishment, but an attempt at reminding ourselves that our country couldn't possibly have held together so well for so long without certain essential qualities in its most distinguished citizens. William O. Douglas' *The Court Years* is a good book to read about the kind of men we have had on the Supreme Court over many years, and there is a lot more evidence of this sort salted away in biographies. The indecent side of the Establishment is well known to us, and incidentally is much more noticeable because outrage is easier to recognize than the behavior of men who do what they think is right as a matter of course.

We can't conclude a discussion of this sort without referring once more to Arthur Morgan, who worked in and with the Establishment, yet was himself immeasurably ahead of its common opinions. His *Dams and Other Disasters* (Porter Sargent, 1971) shows how a man of integrity, imagination, and good will was able to work with the best forces in this country, while opposing with vigor (and some success) the stubborn bureaucratic stupidity of the Army Engineers.