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REQUIEM FOR ECONOMISTS

FOR at least a generation, bright young men and women looking for a "challenging" field of work have decided on economics. That, they say, is where the action is—where all our problems originate. If you read the better newspapers, the ones that try to keep track of things that matter—papers like the *New York Times,* the *Washington Post,* and the *Christian Science Monitor*—you will have reason to think that these young people are right. Apart from war—although war is usually shown by historians to have a close relation to money—the troubles overtaking the world seem to be almost always economic. No one needs to go to school to learn this. But what else, one might ask himself, do I know about economics without going to school? Without looking at a book?

The newspapers, in their frequent "analyses" of conditions, make one thing very plain. A crucial factor in what is called "recovery"—and today no nation with substantial resources and industrial plant is without need of recovery—is the capacity and inclination of the people to spend money. If retail sales go up, we are told, things will be better for everyone. Stores will replenish their inventories, manufacturers will get orders, more people will have jobs. And that, you could say, is recovery. The process of recovery is of course closely linked with "growth." The conventional economist hails with praise the appearance of products which people will want, and finally have to have, as for example an automobile, without which it may be difficult, in many areas, to find and hold a job. And the day may soon be upon us when people will feel impoverished unless they have a domestic computer to help with the paper work on which personal economic survival has come to depend.

Even farmers are having to become economists of a sort—managers instead of husbandmen. In *Three Farms* (Little, Brown, 1979), Mark Kramer tells about an Iowa farmer who raises hogs, who has had "to trade independence for participation in a market economy so complexly integrated that he is increasingly forced to specialize, to become an element in a countrywide, statewide, even nationwide production line that by its mere existence determines how his next dollar must be spent and what chores he will do in the next working day." Kramer muses on what this means for farmers—and for a lot of others who are subject to the same sort of change:

> 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 systems 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 concern for quality of product. The loss reverberates all the way down the food supply chain. . . . Supplanting the old system is a new one with slots for people to do what is prescribed.

Not just farmers, but storekeepers, doctors, lawyers, and other small entrepreneurs are subject to this pressure, and governments respond to the same compulsion. As Edward Goldsmith remarked in a recent *Ecologist,* "their [governments'] main preoccupation is to earn the necessary foreign currency required to assure the economic development on which their prestige, power and future must depend." He adds: "To this end they will sacrifice anything—their forests, their land, their topsoil, not to mention their traditions, their culture, their religion, indeed all

that their ancestors, for countless generations, held to be most holy."

Aren't there any economists who point this out, and say what changes should be made? Of course there are, but these might better be called ex-economists, or economists who derive their rules from considerations prior and superior to economic objectives. Their economic views have moral and philosophic grounds. Their thinking starts out with assumptions similar to those of Montesquieu (1689-1755), who said that "freedom, political freedom, is the assurance that you can do what you ought to do, and that you will not be forced to do what you ought not to do." That, nearly everyone will admit, is a pretty good definition. It was substantially repeated by one ex-economist, E. F. Schumacher, who said in 1975:

> One of our fundamental needs is to be able to act in accordance with our moral impulses. In a big organization our freedom to do so is inevitably severely restricted. Our primary duty is to stay within the rules and regulations, which, although contrived by human beings, are not themselves human beings. . . . As a result, big organizations often behave very badly, very immorally, very stupidly and inhumanely, not because the people inside them are any of these things, but simply because the organization carries the load of bigness.

Well, what does Schumacher have to say about "standards of living," which make the driving force of our economic system—declaring the goals we strive for? In one of the chapters of *Small Is Beautiful* ("Buddhist Economics") he shows how he would reverse conventional Western thinking on this subject, pointing out that the convinced Buddhist seeks the *least* material acquisition that will produce a satisfactory result.

> For the modern economist this is very difficult to understand. He is used to measuring the "standard of living" by the amount of annual consumption, assuming all the time that a man who consumes more is "better off" than a man who consumes less. A Buddhist economist would consider this approach excessively irrational: since consumption is merely a means to human well-being, the aim should be to obtain the maximum of well-being with the minimum of consumption. Thus, if the purpose of clothing is a certain amount of temperature comfort and an attractive appearance, the task is to attain this purpose with the smallest possible effort, that is, with the smallest annual destruction of cloth and with the help of designs that involve the smallest possible input of toil. The less toil there is, the more time and strength for artistic creativity. It would be highly uneconomic, for instance, to go in for complicated tailoring, like the modern West, when a much more beautiful effect can be achieved by the skillful draping of uncut material. It would be the height of folly to make material so that it should wear out quickly and the height of barbarity to make anything ugly, shabby or mean. What has just been said about clothing applies equally to all other human requirements. The ownership and consumption of goods is a means to an end, and Buddhist economics is the systematic study of how to attain given ends with the minimum means.

Schumacher's account of Buddhist economics makes an embarrassing amount of sense—embarrassing because if you start thinking in this way you may be appalled by the "economic" consequences. If *everybody* joined you in adopting this model, most stores would close, many factories shut down, and an unbearable number of people would be thrown out of work. Moral common sense, in short, means economic paralysis for us. Yet, needless to say, any real change in this direction will be gradual and might in the long run be tolerable for all; but the point for here and now is that someone who decides to become a Buddhist-type economist will need to find some other way of making a living: no systems thinker would ever hire him. And one might recall the TV reporter who was driven out of town in the South because he broadcast facts about the pollution of local waters by a large paper mill. He was fired by the station and his life was threatened by the workers in the mill, who didn't want it to be shut down.

One also recalls the succinct observations of Barbara Tuchman in her 1972 essay, "The Civilian versus the Military," concerned with responsibility for the Vietnam War. She began by pointing out that there were then "defense plants or installations in 363 out of the 435 congressional

districts in this country—in five sixths of the total."

> Who benefits? Who profits? Who lobbies in Congress to keep them in operation or to attract new plants where there are none? If you say it is the Pentagon, do not forget the local merchants and manufacturers, the local unions and employers, and the local Congressmen whom we put there and whom we can recall.

A non-violent Buddhist economist, if moved (or obliged) to make his opinions known would soon be ostracized. Yet, given an opportunity, he would argue that while his views may seem a threat to the national defense, and, indeed, to the economy if armament factories were closed, he is interested in saving the moral quality of human life, in the restoration of community, and in preventing the immeasurable destruction and slaughter of nuclear war.

But then, there is the musing conclusion of Robert Engler, after listening to an Israeli army officer, veteran of five Israeli wars, express his strong feeling that Israel should find a way to make peace with the Arab world, but add that he would nonetheless pay his taxes and fight if called.

> What [Mr. Engler asked himself] could an American say to this colonel who has done so much for his country? Could I tell him that perhaps now was the time to say "no"? Here am I, paying taxes to my own government whose vast military expenditures include substantial aid for Israel's war as well as for many other actions about whose misguidedness I have even fewer doubts. (*Progressive*, November, 1982.)

Years ago MANAS had a story about a New York hoodlum who, to avoid going to prison, joined the marines. Well, the marines, he said, helped him to pull himself together, give up his old ways, and then, after his stint was over, he found a way to go to a university and become a lawyer and a useful citizen. Again, there was another story by a European pacifist in one of the smaller countries who was thinking about the some fifty or more thousand men in his nation's army, many of them members of families which for generations had supplied the military service with men—decent, self-respecting individuals who believed in the traditions of the army and who probably could find no other work.

What are we getting at, here? We are trying to make Schumacher's point in other ways. Big institutions, political and economic, develop rigid ways of doing things that may seem good (for a while), but are eventually disastrous for either a few or many, and, after a time, for all who must live by their rules. As Schumacher put it:

> It strikes me as astonishing how little systematic study has been given to the all-pervading question of size. Aristotle knew about its importance, and so did Karl Marx, who insisted that with changes in quantity you get at certain thresholds changes in quality. Aristotle said: "To the size of states there is a limit, as there is to other things, plants, animals, implements; for none of these retain their natural power when they are too large or too small, but they either wholly lose their nature or are spoiled."
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> Organizations, like these "other things," may well grow to such a size that they wholly lose their nature or are altogether spoiled. An organization may have been set up to render various services to all sorts of helpless, needy people; it grows and grows, and suddenly you find that it does not serve the people any more but simply pushes them around. . . . let us organize units of such a size that their administrative requirements become minimal. In other words, let us have them on a *human* scale, so that the need for rules and regulations is minimized and all difficult cases can be resolved, as it were, on the spot, face to face, without creating precedents—for where there is no rule there cannot be a precedent.
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> The problem of administration is thus reduced to a problem of size. Small units are self-administrating in the sense that they do not require full-time administrators of exceptional ability; almost anybody can see to it that things are kept in reasonable order and everything that needs to be done is done by the right person at the right time. . . . for every organization, as for other things, there is a "critical size" which must be attained before the organization can have any effectiveness at all. But this is hardly a thought that needs to be specially emphasized, since everybody understands it instinctively. What does need to be emphasized is that "critical size" is likely to be very much smaller than most people in our mass society are inclined to believe.

Another important point:

> A large organization, to be able to function at all, requires an elaborate administrative structure. Administration is a most difficult and exacting job which can be done only by exceptionally industrious people. The administrators of a large organization cannot deal concretely with real life problems and situations: they have to deal with them abstractly. . . . We all know that life, all too often, is stranger than fiction; the dilemma of the administrators, therefore, is severe: either they make innumerable rules the enforcement of which then requires whole armies of minor officials, or they limit themselves to a few rules which then produce innumerable hard cases and absurdities calling for special treatment; every special treatment, however, constitutes a precedent which is, in effect, a new rule.

This is an analysis which everyone of us can document or illustrate, usually in spades. Schumacher's basic point is that the decision-makers in large organizations must reach their decisions *abstractly*, which is fine when they are dealing with entities such as iron, wood, and stone, or power-producing engines operated on the laws of physics; but human beings are not wood and stone; their natures are infinitely variable, also their potentialities, and again their weaknesses and vulnerabilities; and the less "administration" they are subjected to, the more responsibility they accept and are able to fulfill. Abstract decisions about humans, made over their heads, has the unhappy effect of making the rules of economics (as applied to the labor force) seem like the laws of nature to the administrators, while the workers, the spirited among them, that is, become rebels and conspirators unable to think of their jobs except in terms of an adversary relationship.

The study of economics in conventional terms is most unlikely to bring to the fore the issues behind such situations. A philosopher is required for this. For example, after a discussion of the fact that modern corporations are actually private or invisible governments, Scott Buchanan (in *So Reason Can Rule*) spoke of the problems which arise:

> Many of the new questions concern the kind of human beings that are formed by the corporations they belong to. These are difficult questions to answer, but they should be asked, and they can be answered if they are kept in order. This essay leads to one of these new questions: how do the political habits formed by members of corporations fit with the habits that republican forms of government have developed in their citizens heretofore? The answers to this question are not definite or final; such as they are, they can best be summarized by a sharp observer of a few years ago, Mark Twain: "It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have these unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practice either." It may be that the corporation is the school of political prudence in which we learn not to practice what the political republic has always preached.

This is a way of taking cognizance of the fact that economists want economics to be a science, dealing with the predictable character of goods or "things," while getting rid of the "wild" factors which no science can tolerate—the human element in the economists' equations, of necessity reduced to statistics and treated, as Schumacher says, "abstractly." This means that economics cannot be a science unless people are made to count only as things.

But this is intolerable! Of course, yet thousands of young men and women go to school every year to learn the rules of economics based on this assumption. From a moral point of view, academic economics is a vast distraction from thinking like a human being.

People have been sensing this in growing numbers since the 1960s, when a generation of young—self-selected members of a generation—rejected the luxury of their affluent parents, saying "We don't want any part of it." For those who doubt the reality of this broad change in feeling, a reading of Theodore Roszak's *The Making of a Counter Culture* might be in order. Another "wave" of imminent change was reported by some Stanford Research Institute analysts (Arnold Mitchell and Duane Elgin) in 1977, with publication of a report on the number and kind of

people in the United States who are turning toward a simpler life. This "voluntary simplicity" movement is said to represent the fastest growing segment of the population, counted in the millions. Voluntary simplicity is defined as "a way of living that reflects inner convictions: first, that it is better to have things on a human scale; second, that it is better to live frugally, to conserve, to recycle, not to waste, and third, that the inner life, rather than externals, is central." Last year Duane Elgin's book, *Voluntary Simplicity* (with title borrowed from Richard Gregg's 1936 article published in India, and reprinted in MANAS in 1974), presented substantial evidence of this change.

We have left to the end what seems the most important defect in economic thinking—a defect equally present in political thinking, and any form of institutionalized thinking: the elimination of all recognition of the value of paradox. The good, according to one set of goals or norms, is the not-good according to other standards. No social theory, no political system, no ideology can have reliable truth in it without sustained attention to paradox. But paradox, someone will say, is unacceptable to a mass society! And he will be completely right. No one could gain office in this country on a platform which acknowledged the uncertainties of paradox.

This is a way of admitting that politics in our time, and in very nearly every other time, is chained to mechanistic thinking. The same judgment applies to economics. We have a civilization of "always more," as de Jouvenal put it. One could say that at the outset of the building of America, we needed "more," but obviously a civilization of too much is as bad or worse than not enough.

What is "enough"? Does anyone know? Yet thinking which ignores this question or presumes to settle it arbitrarily is box canyon thinking that becomes more and more hazardous the longer it is pursued.

Are there any economists who know this, acknowledge it, and teach it? We can think of a few: E.F. Schumacher, Leopold Kohr, Herman Daly, Folkert Wilkern, and more are coming along, but often calling themselves something else. A really good society wouldn't need any economists because the people would themselves know what to do. Paradoxically enough, we have named as economists only the ones out to abolish their profession. The society they envision, calling it a steady state economy, would be the society that knows the meaning of "just enough."

REVIEW
"MAN AND THE ENVIRONMENT"

LOOKING through the pages of a book that first came out more than ten years ago, and finding it good—by no means one you read and then forget—we began to wonder why we hadn't at least heard of it. The answer came in the first page of "The Talk of the Town" in the Dec. 13 *New Yorker,* where the writer muses about the way books are sold, and what happens to them. He saw a sign saying, "Fresh Books—Just Picked by B. Dalton," and other promotional one-liners, remarking that "it would be quixotic to protest that books by their very nature are things that defy time." They can defy time only through our help and insistence. Most booksellers seem quite willing to kill them off. The writer goes on:

> It's hard to know where blame lies for the ascendancy of the book that is meant to be merely consumed—or half consumed—and forgotten: whether writers have learned that their books will have a "shelf life" that is shorter than that of the hardier vegetables and so write accordingly or whether bookstores, reacting to a new, consumable kind of book, have changed their idea of what books are, and treat them accordingly. . . .
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> If a book is something like that, like food, we enjoy and then forget, then books are little different from the stream of thought that flows endlessly through the mind of each of us and disappears unrecorded. Millions of us may read the same book, but it doesn't stand outside us as something that we share. It doesn't create a bit of territory more lasting than our ever-vanishing personal experience: it is not a distillation of experience—it is experience. And to the extent that what really interests us in the news is topics that have to do with our intimate concerns rather than with what is happening in the realm of public affairs, we have no public affairs—only private ones. Millions of us may watch the same news program, but with this trend there is less and less that connects us. Under these circumstances, we read books and follow the news in the same way that we eat vegetables and cope with personal problems—that is, within the compass of our own immediate worlds, those vivid little worlds that fall into nothingness at the speed of time. The result is not just a drastically reduced horizon but a situation in which the big world seems to dim into vagueness and abstraction. In this wilderness of perishable personal experience, it becomes more and more difficult to even glimpse the actuality of our life together.

If recollection serves, it was Milton, in *Areopagitica,* who said that to kill a good book is equal to killing a man, and that is exactly what we all seem to be doing, or tolerating, in the way books are "consumed" these days. The good ones, which very much deserve to survive—and which we need for ourselves in order to survive—are thrown aside like so much shredder-degradable trash, along with the authentic junk.

Well, after this long (but not irrelevant) introduction, the book we want to help keep alive and influential is Wes Jackson's *Man and the Environment* (Wm. C. Brown, Dubuque, Iowa 52001, $10.95), which first appeared in 1971, and has been through three editions. This book, briefly, is about what humans have done to the environment, what the environment is now doing to us—responding in kind—with a section on things we can do to get back to normal—sustainable—life. There are dozens of contributors, starting with Plato and Isaiah, and ending with people like Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins (not to leave out Aldo Leopold, Chief Seathl, Sitting Bull, Don Marquis, Darwin, D.H. Lawrence, Karl Hess, and George Wald). The editor (and contributor), Wes Jackson, says in his preface: "The reader may be surprised that the readings in the search for alternatives section have little to do with hardware such as solar collectors and wind generators and more to do with points of view which can ultimately change the direction of society."

The section on Environmental Issues takes up imminent or present crises, some we don't know about and some we do. The crisis of diminishing firewood in the Third World is one we haven't heard much about and Erik Eckholm begins "The Other Energy Crisis" by saying:

> Dwindling reserves of petroleum and artful tampering with its distribution are the stuff of which headlines are made. Yet for more than a third of the world's people the real energy crisis is a daily scramble to find the wood they need to cook dinner. Their search for wood, once a simple chore and now, as forests recede, a day's labor in some places, has been strangely neglected by diplomats, economists, and the media. But the firewood crisis will be making news—one way or another—for the rest of the century.

Chief Seathl said in 1855 in a letter to "The Great Chief in Washington":

> There is no quiet place in the white man's cities. No place to hear the leaves of spring or the rustle of insect's wings. But perhaps because I am a savage and do not understand—the clatter only seems to insult the ears. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lovely cry of a whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night? The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of the pond, and the smell of the wind itself cleansed by a mid-day rain, or scented with a pinion pine. The air is precious to redman. For all things share the same breath—the beasts, the trees, the man. The whiteman does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench. . . .
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> We might understand if we knew what it was that the white man dreams, what hopes he describes to his children on long winter nights, what visions he burns into their minds, so that they will wish for tomorrow. But we are savages. The white man's dreams are hidden from us. And because they are hidden, we will go our own way.

Sitting Bull's remarks are shorter (in 1877):

> They claim this Mother Earth of ours for their own and fence their neighbors away from them. They degrade the landscape with their buildings and their waste. They compel the natural earth to produce excessively and when it fails, they force it to take medicine to produce more. This is evil.

In the section on analysis, Fred Hapgood, a hundred years later, begins where the Indians left off:

> The science that we were all brought up on instructed us in and stood for a view of nature that was not dissimilar from the Victorian's view of Africa. Both could be colonized, their secrets assaulted, their frontiers thrown back without any fear that a trespass had been committed. Scientists explored and penetrated and mastered; they won victories over a nature that had been wastefully locked away in mystery until they came along, and penned it up in a cage of determinist relations. We applauded and trusted this kind of achieving in all aspects of the culture.
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> Of course both the nuclear reactor and the recombinant issues are argued in terms of their effect on the public health, but one is never sure how seriously one should take such terms. We are a pragmatic society, suspicious of philosophy, which means only that we must translate metaphysical questions into issues of health and economics before we feel they can be properly raised. No one argues against the space program on the explicit grounds that it embodies the wrong assumptions about man and his correct relationship to the earth and the stars, but such grounds seem to me to lurk just below the surface of the debates about diverting funds from health care. We talk as though all that concerns us is the health of the body, but it is difficult for me to believe that we are not, in our own fashion, just as concerned with the health of our souls as the members of every other civilization have been.

Well, there seem to be two reasons for the reticence of people who feel these metaphysical convictions. They—or we—want to persuade the empiricists and the pragmatists who think—or used to think—that metaphysics is all nonsense or just poetry. The trouble with this is that they can always claim that "not enough facts are in." But if we wait until they are, then we may all be dead, dying, or starving. The empiricists are always solidly behind the status quo. This used to seem virtuous but it isn't any more. A substantial number of them—people honestly scientific in their thinking, and with disciplined intelligence—are questioning themselves along these lines. That's why the philosophical questions are opening up and getting attention. And that's why this is a very good book—not just for ten years or so, but for more than a generation. It gives readers reasons to examine their own attitudes. (We used to say consciences, but "attitudes" seems less pushy.)

That is the second reason for being reticent about metaphysics. You can't club anyone into adopting philosophical assumptions. The Platonic inquiry is a dialogue of inward assent; without it, no meeting of minds. The Aristotelian mode was apodictic—two and two make four and you'd better believe it. If you try to use logical compulsion in metaphysical and moral questions, you don't get truth; you get a Holy Inquisition or a GPU.

And that is why Wes Jackson and Wendell Berry are such patient souls, doing what they believe in, talking to those who want to listen, and waiting for the rest to be stirred up by something inside.

COMMENTARY
WHAT "THE WORLD WANTS"

THERE is a further comment by Fred Hapgood (see Review, page 4) that deserves repetition. Speaking of a potential capacity in human beings, manifest in a few, of being able to grasp what is happening "at its most abstract and dealing with it," he says,

> Perhaps that was the evolutionary origin of religion. If this is true, then perhaps what we are doing now is listening: pulling away from those sense organs that seem likely to block nature off, developing others that are more sensitive and open, trying to learn, as we no doubt have thousands of times before, what it is, this time, that the world wants us to become.

Something of this sort might account for the exceptional "intuitions" which come to poets and essayists, articulating what for the rest of us remain vague wonderings. Our difficulty, when we compare these ideas with what we regard as the "certainties" of science, is in how we can know such matters for ourselves. This anxiety is reduced, however, by reflection that the most notable advances in scientific knowledge begin with similar wonderings and intuitions by creative scientists who, sometimes after many years, succeed in establishing what they discover to the satisfaction of their colleagues. Gregor Mendel's statistical theory of heredity remained unacknowledged for at least a quarter of a century, and Albert Einstein challenged one of the axioms of the conventional physics of his time.

A reading of Michael Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* is in order. He points out that "exact science" is by no means as exact as the popular account of scientific conclusions would have us think. And Maslow, in *The Psychology of Science*, notes that present-day scientific conceptions did not spring in verified form from the minds of their creators—like Athena, fully armed, from the brain of Zeus—but began as intellectual "embryos" which had to gain substance from thinking and testing before they became generally acceptable. The same may be true, at another level, of metaphysical thinking having to do with "what the world wants us to become." In this case, "confirmation" is available from the philosophic consensus of seers and great religious teachers who were "more sensitive and open" than the rest.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
EDIBLE LANDSCAPING

YEARS ago, a Madison Avenue copywriter, wondering about the sales possibilities of a new product, said to his colleagues, "Let's run it up on the flagpole and see who salutes!" He meant, we'll do a test campaign to see how many of the consumers out there respond. The flagpoles are the "media."

Fortunately, there are other flagpoles, inspected by small but growing audiences who resist being treated as mere consumers. We mean magazines and books issued for readers who are seeking engagements instead of purchases. They do some purchasing, but what they buy is a means, not only an end to having and holding. The motives for this change of interests are various but one underlying reason is that a consumer society is basically indecent when it comes to bringing up children. The young themselves announced this back in the sixties, when so many of them left home. Where did they go? Where could they find what they were looking for? There are mostly mournful answers to these questions, but in the years since a number of non-commercial flagpoles, modest in height, have been coming into sight.

Take for example the book, *Edible Landscaping*, by Rosalind Creasy (Sierra Club, close to four hundred big pages, $14.95 in paperback), devoted to persuading people that food-bearing plants and trees are an appropriate way of beautifying the home. One of the impressive things about the book is the large number of people who are resources for this kind of change in thinking—people who believe in this idea and are eager to be of help. They make a "public" worth thinking about and maybe joining.

Rosalind Creasy, a professional landscaper in Los Altos, California, starts out:

> If Johnny Appleseed were to visit present-day suburbia, he would weep. In most yards he would be likely to find not a fruit-laden apple tree, but a flowering crabapple, cherry, or peach tree—none bearing fruit. Fifty years ago he would have had more luck. Our grandmothers usually kept a fruiting apple, cherry, or peach tree in their front yards, and grew vegetables and herbs near the kitchen door. The trees not only were beautiful at blossom time, but they provided fruits to be eaten fresh and preserved for the months ahead. Some of the vegetables, too, provided pleasure to the eye as well as provender for the pantry.

But then people stopped growing food, and botanists developed species for "beauty" instead of home-grown diet. Not to grow food meant you were rich enough to get all you needed at the store. Inedible plantings were a sign of success. Meanwhile agricultural technology developed its machine-like efficiency, making mass-produced food cheap. Five per cent of our population could feed all the rest of us.

> Despite the old saying that "you can take the person out of the country, but you can't take country out of the person," the whole nation seemed to agree that we were well rid of the need to grow our own food. But even if we had wanted to grow some edibles—just for fun, perhaps—other developments constrained us. For example, as suburbs and subdivisions multiplied, individual families found themselves with less land and fewer opportunities to express their personal tastes through landscaping. Developers often dictated the landscaping tone for whole neighborhoods by cutting down trees and putting in lawns; "neighbor pressure" further contributed to conformity.

So, back in those prosperous days of the sixties, about all youngsters could do around the conventional home was wash the dishes and mow the lawn—not a participation in which there is much joy or "creativity." That's one case for growing food plants around the home. It will help to make the family a family once again. Rosalind Creasy argues more broadly:

> Will this book take a stand against beauty? Will it advocate that we spend all our free time "putting up" or drying peaches? To these questions, I reply that as a gardener I enjoy flowers and all growing things, as a landscape designer I am a seeker after beauty, and as a homemaker I do not need more chores. Still, the fact that most Americans are totally dependent on commercial agriculture for their food concerns me greatly. I consider the average citizen's lack of involvement with the land, our most basic

> source of sustenance, to be one of the most destructive results of the escalating complexity and specialization of our society. Among my other concerns are skyrocketing food prices and the possible health hazards associated with the increasing number of chemicals used in commercial food production. Finally, I am alarmed at the waste of natural resources our present practices generate. In a world where fertile soil is an endangered resource, millions of acres of our nation's best agricultural soil are covered with ornamental shrubs and lawns. Soil can be brought into production for agriculture only at great economic and environmental cost. Why do we allow so much of what we have to remain unproductive? Furthermore, the water we use to irrigate our purely decorative landscapes is finite, and the fossil fuels we use in maintaining them are nonrenewable. We are becoming aware that our wasteful ways may be having irreversible consequences.

When you get into the "how to" part of the book, you may forget these practical reasons because what is suggested seems so sensible, so much fun. Drawings illustrate the text all the way through, and in the back are lists of suppliers of seeds and plants—hundreds of them, all seeming to be people in sympathy with what you may attempt—part of the "public" we spoke of. Incidentally, there are several pages on how to keep your house warmer in winter, cooler in summer, by planting the right trees in the right places. And on this subject of energy, we found the following of special interest:

> We are presently spending over 20 per cent of our national energy budget to produce food. In terms of British Thermal Units [BTUs], the standard units of measure for energy, we now use 20 BTUs of fuel energy to produce 1 BTU of food energy. By comparison, in 1910 that ratio was 1 to 1.

Rosalind Creasy is of course an "organic" gardener, and she has some wise words to say on this subject. One thing more. She is a professional who has been dealing with clients—the "public"—for some years, and she fully realizes that she has to make instructions crystal clear. Few books on gardening are as immediately "involving" as this one, especially the chapter on Small-Area Landscaping, for people with small yards.

Somehow, this book recalls an item in the Dec. 20 *Western Colorado Report* (Box V, Paonia, Colorado 81428) on Herman Allmara, a former physics teacher now in the seed business, who owns twenty acres of good agricultural land that could easily be swallowed up by real estate developers. Two years ago he was offered $10,000 an acre but he wasn't, isn't, selling. Instead, according to the report, he has committed six of those acres to agriculture from now to eternity. (Apparently, you can do this by registering your intention at the county courthouse.) The land is near a highway, in the town called Palisade, a few minutes from Grand Junction. Eventually, he says, he will commit the rest of his twenty acres. This makes his land worth less than half of what the developers would be glad to pay him, but he is going to go on raising seed on the land. Why? Because this, he says, is the *rational* thing to do. He is thinking about "the rightness of things," and "the future well-being of his children and grandchildren, or even about long-term economic gain."

> In Allmara's view, those who bust agriculture for short-term profits aren't even making rational long-term business choices, let alone rational choices for America's over-all good. In his view—agriculture—especially in the Palisade area—has high economic potential if the land doesn't get paved over. He sees easements which lock good agricultural land into agriculture as a way to impose a long-term renewable treasure on those who will eventually own the land. Even now, he says, good Palisade orchard land is worth more in trees than in houses.
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> Why don't people realize that? Or, to put it in Allmara's words: "Why do we line up like ten pins for Exxon to bowl down when we have this ongoing resource?"
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> The answer, he says, is lack of information and lack of people with the skills to develop the agricultural resource to the fullest.

Here is one man who has found both reason and means for "staying with the land." He grows his seed, operates a mobile home park, and does solar and small hydroelectric consulting.

FRONTIERS

Encouraging Developments

IN the Fall 1982 *Tilth*—a quarterly journal published "as a link between urban and rural people growing food and promoting agriculture" in the Pacific Northwest—an article based on the work of rural sociologists reports a change in the direction of population movement. "For the first time in this century more people were moving to rural areas than leaving them," and the number of farms is beginning to increase. Interviews with these new settlers showed that they were interested in a better quality of life.

> Evidently, there has been a subtle but fairly pervasive change in values. People are willing to accept reduced pay, less opportunity for job advancement, and fewer cultural amenities in exchange for clean air, safe streets, a sense of community and a less hectic life style. . . . Though it is still too early to tell, the new rural residents probably have a greater commitment to environmental issues than their neighbors. . . . The newer residents may help to shape community opinion and decisions, particularly if they get involved in local organizations such as the Grange. . . In a few years we may have legislators whose politics reflect a mix of environmental commitment, fiscal conservatism, and a preference for decentralized government.

Meanwhile, in contrast—

> The most disruptive rural growth has come from large scale energy developments. Washington State University sociologist William R. Freudenburg has found that crime, social stress and mental health problems increase rapidly in energy boom towns. The transient population needed for construction requires services (water, power, sewers, schools roads, etc.) it won't remain behind to pay for. Wheat farmers in Lincoln County, Washington, have realized what a large coal plant will mean to the Creston community and are opposing Washington Water Power's proposed thermal project. (*Tilth* is published at 13217 Mattson Road, Arlington, Washington, at $10 a year.)

In *Gandhi Marg* for September, 1982, Arthur Stein (of the University of Rhode Island), discussing "Human Dignity in Rural America," describes a restorative trend:

> In the 1970s there was an encouraging development in places from Maine to Appalachia to Georgia of people coming together to market their home-crafted products collectively and thereby receive a much more equitable monetary return for their work. One such successful group is Homeworkers Organized for More Employment (HOME). It was started along the coast of Maine in the community of Orland in 1970 by local people in an effort to improve their living conditions.

Through HOME'S efforts, there are now self-run community-based marketing outlets which have led to the revival of cottage industries with resulting family income.

> The money received from their crafts cooperatives has made the difference between basic survival and some measure of comfort and dignity for hundreds of families who have participated in the cooperative. As the HOME concept spread, cooperative outlet shops for craft and farm products opened up in a number of towns through the region. In Orland itself a cluster of community workshops have been built for leatherworking, weaving, ceramics, woodworking, and other crafts. Pooling their resources has enabled members to acquire tools of very good quality and other needed equipment. Instead of working in isolation in their individual homes, women can come together and work with others in a pleasant environment. Their young children can attend the day-care center and a little school in the compound, and mothers can spend time with the children during the day. The boys and girls can see their parents at work and can also gain a first-hand knowledge about the skilled techniques used in making the products. Some men have joined in the craft cooperatives as well, working alongside the women.

HOME also has a land trust which enables people to acquire farms and homes on a cooperative basis (helping others to build energy-efficient houses).

A review in the *Community Service Newsletter* (P.O. Box 243, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387) reports on a new edition (Porter Sargent, publisher) of Peter Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* ($6.95, paper), written in 1890 to reply to Thomas

Huxley's "Struggle for Existence." This edition has a foreword by Ashley Montagu. Also available is an updated edition of *The Community Land Trust Handbook* (Rodale Press, $9.95 in paperback). Another good book is *We Own It* by three authors, issued last year by Bell Springs Publishing—on how to start and manage a co-op, every kind—which may be had for $9.00 from Community Service (add 10% for shipping and postage).

A journal of merit which comes from Australia is *Permaculture* (a quarterly now $12.00 a year for U.S. readers—37 Goldsmith St., Maryborough 3465, Australia). A recent issue has an article by Stephen Lesiuk (of Sydney University) on climate control through tree-planting. One mature tree, the author says, "provides nearly as much cooling as five 3KW air conditioners." The hard surfaces—concrete, asphalt, brick and block—absorb and conduct heat more rapidly than grass and tree-covered fields. The cooling effect of rain is lost because the water is not absorbed but hurried to sewers, robbing the soil.

> Plants usually intercept around 70 per cent of the incoming solar radiation, although some plants intercept as much as 90 per cent. Landscaping can, therefore, cool surfaces below and around them by reducing the amount of energy which passes through. The obvious advantage with deciduous trees and vines is that in summer they can dramatically reduce the amount of heat entering your house, while in winter they will allow the sun to pass through and heat the house.

In several pages, this writer shows how trees and shrubs may be used for a variety of purposes, drawing on Icelandic, Chinese, ancient Egyptian, and Persian sources.

Some interesting figures are provided by Greg Watson in the *New Alchemy Quarterly* for the Summer of 1982, such as "that the average distance between consumers and the source of their food is 1300 miles!"

> The fact that a California tomato might cost me less than a Massachusetts grown tomato at the supermarket checkout counter is really not a contradiction or exception to this rule. The true cost of that California tomato gets lost in the fabric of our incredibly complex economic system. . . . The important point to be made here is that as people are removed farther from the source of their basic needs, the costs associated with meeting those needs are sure to increase. This is a powerful argument in favor of decentralization. . . .
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> Thirteen years ago, the land that New Alchemy now occupies was considered of too poor quality to support agriculture. Today, we produce enough food on a tenth of an acre of land to provide thirteen people with their yearly vegetable needs. Our agriculturalists improved the quality of the soil by adding composted materials, like leaves, seaweed and manure. Our strategy for fighting the high costs of food and energy is to produce as much as we can as close to home as possible, using indigenous resources whenever possible. It is a *whole systems* approach to economic problems.

Well, we have quoted from four journals filled with intelligence on the side of life—papers very different from what were available fifty or even twenty-five years ago. This is confirming evidence that "there has been a subtle but fairly pervasive change in values."