

THE HIDDEN TRUTHS

WHAT will be the effect of discovering the slippery character of many of the things we want most to know? This progressive realization—that what we have thought to be reliable knowledge doesn't apply to our present problems; that our methods of reaching certainty shut out vital considerations; and that even our goals, when reached, bring only impatient longing for something else—is now beginning to seem the most important achievement of the twentieth century.

One result is bound to be a great reduction in the energy that goes into collectivist thinking. Collectivist—political—thinking involves making plans for other people, and if we know so little about what is good to do, it becomes foolish and presumptuous to continue the construction of elaborate political theory. An example of the outlook we can expect to see become much more common is found in the reflections of Ronald Sampson (quoted recently in Review). Although himself a lecturer in political science, Mr. Sampson has decided:

. . . my task in this world does not consist in devising "democratic" constitutions . . . or organs of representation of other people's wills, which do not admit of representation anyway. Nobody has invested me with power over and thus responsibility for my fellow men. . . . My task is so to conduct my life as not to be on the back of my neighbor, so as not to intrude without consent into his life, his fortunes, his destiny. If I can go beyond that and genuinely serve his needs when he asks for help, so much the better. But it is enough that I get off his back and let him breathe free.

Mr. Sampson is an Englishman, a thoughtful and somewhat influential Englishman, and while it may be a long time before many of his countrymen recognize the profound common sense in what he says, just imagine what sort of revolution will be under way when they do!

Some recent observations by a Canadian writer, Ruben Nelson, a consultant on planning and management, illustrate a parallel conclusion:

. . . the first thing we need to do is to begin to understand deeply and powerfully the degree to which our present imaginations are misshapen and the process of that misshaping in all its subtlety and power. . . . The temptation of Western man, and that surely includes Canadians, is that, in our desire to get on with doing, with building a better world, we do not begin to dream of the degree to which the commonly accepted rubrics on the basis of which we act flow from and reinforce misunderstandings of life.

For some time to come, therefore, we will have a much richer sense of the things we ought not to do than what it is that will sustain life.

How or why did we get into all this trouble, acquire so much certainty about things which aren't so? Surely there has been justification for so much confidence and optimism in the past.

A simple answer would be that we have been securely caught in a net of beguiling half-truths. The whole truths—which seem never to survive outside the symmetries of mathematics—have to be cut down to the patterns of half-truths in order to put them to work, and being insistently practical people, we do this quite willingly. Take the question of the Rights of Man. There isn't anything you can say about the rights of man which is more than a half-truth, for the reason that no right has depth of meaning unless it is linked with an equivalent responsibility. And even here, after you have neatly tied each "right" in tandem with a defined responsibility, the project tends to bog down from sheer complexity. You qualify, explain, and balance out the argument in appropriate detail, but before you are done people have lost interest. A practical man will say, "Let the half-truths stand the way they are, so we can get some *good* out of them. Time enough, later on, for all the other halves. Decent people, when

they have their rights, will turn naturally to fulfillment of responsibilities. "

Well, there may be a few decent people who naturally accept responsibility when they get their rights, but it turns out that practically all of them had been thoroughly responsible before their rights were assured, which may be why the half-truths didn't confuse their thinking.

A passage at the end of Henry Bamford Parkes' *The American Experience* (Knopf, 1947, and Vintage paperback) sets the stage for a further consideration of political half-truths:

Ever since the time of Alexander Hamilton, Americans who have felt a need for order have often turned back to European traditions of authority and class hierarchy in the belief that a democracy must necessarily be anarchical and hostile to cultural standards. But according to the evidence of history there is no necessary connection between high civilization and any particular political and social system. Civilization flourishes when society is permeated with humane values, and at different periods this has occurred under the rule of kings, of aristocracies, and of popular majorities. If the American faith in the possibilities of a democratic civilization has not so far come to full fruition, it is not because of any inherent incompatibility between high cultural attainment and popular government, but because, as a result of certain specific factors in their historical experience Americans have been too narrowly intent on the production and consumption of goods.

Here the key conceptions to be understood are Democracy, Hierarchy, and Anarchy. The arguments for Democracy are loaded with the subjective values of Liberty and Equality. We think we know quite well why we place such high value on Liberty and Equality, yet their meanings are elusive. Our strong feeling about the importance of freedom seems to depend almost entirely on its absence—that is, a man actively using his freedom hardly ever thinks about it. Not "freedom," but the project, engages his attention. One could say that freedom is the condition which permits us to sacrifice our freedom to whatever we choose to do. If you argue that freedom is the absence of limitation on behavior—the elimination

of all constraint—this gets us into trouble for the reason that in a world with no limiting conditions there would be *nothing* to do. It follows that natural constraints which seem to affect all humans equally are acceptable; we don't think of high mountains or storms at sea as curtailments of human freedom. The idea has little significance except in relation to the conditions imposed by men on other men. And that is mainly what a constitution is—constraints imposed by men on other men, or by men upon themselves. Freedom, in short, is almost entirely a subjective value.

What about Hierarchy? Is hierarchy a "value"? It doesn't seem so. Hierarchy, we might say, is a law of nature that seems in direct contradiction to the value of Equality. Yet hierarchy is a behavioral rule written in the grain of all organic life, perhaps in the structure of the universe. Among the cells and organs of every living thing there are generals and privates, rulers and ruled. At the core of the natural order is the distinction between germ cells and somatic cells—the germ cells preserving the knowledge of how to build an entire organism, while somatic cells are responsible for only small parts of the whole.

Well, we know what happens when human societies follow this hierarchical model in nature. In our historical experience, tyranny results. Power leads to the abuse of power, and the more power the greater the abuse, as Lord Acton declared.

How, then, can we justify what Prof. Parkes said, to the effect that there have been high civilizations under the control of kings and aristocracies? Well, there is another rule of behavior which highly placed human beings have the option to adopt, and when they do, there is no abuse of power. *Noblesse oblige* is the term used to describe this option. The power is turned to the service of others. Interestingly, in the early days of the American Republic, which had abolished hereditary nobility, there was a great deal of *noblesse oblige* in the practice of a remarkable group of citizens who gravitated

naturally to responsible roles. They thought about the common good and acted in its behalf. No one obliged them to do this. Voluntary public service was not written into the Constitution. How could it be, and remain voluntary? But the reason the Constitution worked so well for a time was because these men, whatever their personal shortcomings, were spontaneously "obedient to the unenforceable." A conclusion might be that laws work well—or, in the long run, work at all—only when in addition to obeying the law men are obedient to what can't be put into law.

There seem to be numerous confusing half-truths involved in this situation.

Now we come to Anarchy. The anarchists are united in the heroic resolve to cut the Gordian knot of politics. Anything so filled with contradictions, half-truths, and misapplications of power ought to be abolished entirely, they say. Just do away with political power; if we need some order in our lives, unless we can establish it without coercing anybody, the order isn't worth having.

The anarchists root their political—or anti-political—doctrine in the discovery made by Ronald Sampson: "My task is so to conduct my life as not to be on the back of my neighbor." Well, the anarchist view may be hard to defend, but it's harder to defeat. As always comes out in the work of great anarchist thinkers, they believe in *self-government*—autarky, as it is sometimes put. The anarchists usually explain that they have extreme difficulty in getting an anarchist society going because the world has such an evil past, with so many bad habits still in force and with so much ignorance and misconception supporting the habits. MANAS has waiting for review a fine book that lends strength to this claim—*The Anarchist Collectives: Workers' Self-Management in the Spanish Revolution 1936-1939* (Free Life Editions, \$10.00), edited by Sam Dolgoff. The verdict on this great anarchist experiment under the most obstructive conditions seems to be: It worked. In short, the Spanish anarchists found a

way to relate the ideal of freedom with the law of hierarchy without ordering anyone around. This established a functional equality. The key to what happened seems evident in a reflective paragraph by Murray Bookchin, who writes the Introduction to Sam Dolgoff's book:

It will never be possible to eliminate the fact that human beings have different levels of knowledge and consciousness. Our prolonged period of dependence as children, the fact that we are largely the products of an acquired culture and that experience tends to confer knowledge on the older person would lead to such differences even in the most liberated society. In hierarchical societies, the dependence of the less-informed on the more-informed is commonly a means of manipulation and power. The older, more experienced person, like the parent, has this privilege, experience, at his or her disposal and, with it, an alternative: to use knowledge and oratorical gifts as means of domination and to induce adulation—or for the goal of lovingly imparting knowledge and experience, for equalizing the relationship between teacher and taught, and always leaving the less experienced and informed individual free to make his or her decisions.

Of course, there will be people who say that you don't have to be an anarchist to accept these principles, which will work well in any sort of society, since they are the basis of all good human relationships; and some anarchists would reply that if you accept the principles, you are an anarchist to the extent that you find a way to practice them. In any event, purity in anarchism is very hard to define, very subjective in character.

The prevailing view is that human nature is as yet quite imperfect and seems to require at least *some* ordering from the outside. This was the issue as the Founding Fathers saw it, and the determination of the first Americans to have an orderly society led various historians to declare that the American Revolution has been misnamed. What seems a balanced account of what happened is given by Pauline Maier in *From Resistance to Revolution*:

The colonists' constitutional arguments, their consistent respect for traditional procedures, even their efforts to contain violence have given later

generations an impression that the American Revolution was hardly revolutionary at all. The colonists did not seek change; they set out to defend a constitutional system which had been established, they believed, with the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Here, however, they resembled many other revolutionaries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who also set out to restore an uncorrupted past. Only when that goal proved unobtainable did contenders establish new regimes that differed profoundly from the past, transforming their own land and sometimes shifting a wider civilization as well.

The colonists sought a past that could not be rewon, if indeed it had ever existed. Hence, to protect liberty as they understood it, the Americans broke off from their Mother Country and undertook one of the earliest modern colonial wars for independence. The movement toward independence constituted the negative phase of the Revolution, a rejection of old and once-revered institutions and ties, which for contemporaries constituted a major upheaval in its own right. It, moreover, opened up a second phase of more widespread influence: a revolution in constitutional forms. The achievement of profound political change in the state and federal constitutions of the 1770's and 1780's grew logically out of the popular agitation of the years before independence. The American leaders' concern with peace and good order, their technique of curtailing individual violence by organizing, in effect institutionalizing, mass force—which continued beyond the extra-legal institutions of the 1760's into the committees, conventions, and congresses of the mid-1770's—led naturally toward the re-establishment of regular government. The overall form of these new institutions had also been largely determined by July 1776. Disillusionment with the English constitution and with contemporary English rulers had proceeded simultaneously until it became clear that the newly-founded American state should not be modeled after that of England. Instead, it would be what the colonists came to call "republican." This conversion to republicanism transformed "a petty rebellion within the Empire into a symbol for the liberation of all mankind"; it meant that Americans helped open what R. R. Palmer has called the "Age of the Democratic Revolution."

The decision to strike for independence came slowly and reluctantly, and there was little organization of rebellious energies until the first Continental Congress in 1774. "The movement

against Britain was largely decentralized," Pauline Maier says. It was Thomas Paine who opened the way to the new debate concerning the structure of a republican government for America. This was the really radical change, as we can now see. By turning attention to the problems of self-government, he invited the colonists to broaden their attitude to a consideration of their own responsibilities as a self-governing people—which meant trying to balance the half-truths about rights with corresponding truths declaring obligations.

But can this balance be found in ideologies and constitutions, or does it lie in that invisible and unarguable "obedience to the unenforceable" which is the rule of every "society permeated with humane values"?

In the twentieth century another sort of thinking began to gather strength, most notably in evidence in the method proposed and applied by Mohandas Gandhi. Gandhi was the first political thinker who asserted that he would have nothing to do with power—any sort of coercive power—and he practiced this rule throughout his life. The effect of Gandhi's influence has been to suggest the dependence of the visible and well-known half-truths on balancing and enabling and largely hidden truths that can hardly be stated at all—the truths of *noblesse oblige*—those unenforceable obligations accepted and faithfully fulfilled by the few who put the two halves of truth together in their own lives. Only since Gandhi has it been possible to speak without fear of reproach of the law of hierarchy as it applies to human beings, since, in Gandhian terms, the superior human is one who absolutely rejects power over others. There is no conflict with the principle of equality in this case. The true Gandhian always leaves "the less experienced and informed individual free to make his or her decisions."

The vast step of progress accomplished by Gandhi becomes evident from a statement by Jayaprakash Narayan, a former Marxist revolutionary, who pointed out that Gandhi knew

"legal authority would not help him to establish such society as promised the good of all people." Continuing, he said:

Gandhiji was the greatest statesman India has ever known. Our politicians of today all learnt politics at his feet. But Gandhi did not touch the ruling machinery with a pair of tongs. If law could bring grist to the mill of the people he would certainly have accepted office. Law cannot be instrumental in changing socio-economic values or outlook towards life. That is impossible without a basic change—change at the root.

What is the historically new attitude which Gandhi introduced by refusing to "touch the ruling machinery with a pair of tongs"? Implicitly, he was showing that political half-truths alone cannot serve as the foundation of the social order. He was saying, in effect, that there is no use in riding to revolutionary victory on the tide of emotional rejection of some specific evil, since, once the evil is overcome, no principle of social cohesion remains.

What happens, then, to the place and part of rhetoric and propaganda as forms of human persuasion? At the very least, their goals are radically changed. Rhetoric is commonly the tool of those who seek to establish what they claim to be righteous thinking, and propaganda is the method for organizing behavior behind some system of half-truths that cannot survive holistic (impartial) evaluation. The Gandhian outlook allows only one aim of persuasion: that people need to seek and find answers which go beyond the half-truths of the hour. By this means rhetoric and propaganda are made into instruments of the Socratic method. In place of the frenzied pursuit of goals is put the authentication of postulates; instead of establishing conclusions one studies the art of self-reliant search. What this might mean, in practical terms, can hardly become evident until we "get off each other's backs" in intellectual and moral as well as economic terms.

REVIEW

TRACKING THE WATER SUPPLY

ONE achievement of the Winter 1976-77 *CoEvolution Quarterly* is that it may make popular—even fashionable—the idea of learning more about one's local environment. The editor, Stewart Brand, turned almost half the pages of the issue over to Peter Warshall, a watershed consultant who is in love with his work. Aldo Leopold urged people to think like a mountain. Peter Warshall proposes: *Think and see like water*; and, *Think like the soil*, which obtains its life from the water and acts as its host.

In introduction, he says:

Watershed consciousness, the theme of this CQ, is a kind of Middle Way between Mind and Planet. Many of us have pursued an exploration of Mind, of inner consciousness as a Way to better well-being. Others have sought this same feeling by planetary vision, by seeing humans as one of the many wondrous creatures in the biosphere. Watershed consciousness is neither Inner Geography nor Whole Earth geography. It is a more local sense of place where the questions are not as abstract as "Will natural resources keep up with global population growth?" or "When is paranoia appropriate?" The questions are simple: where does the water come from when you turn on the faucet? Where does it go when you flush the toilet? What is the name of the land over which water flows past your home and into a creek or lake?

In this sense, watersheds are mini-biospheres of Earth and the first extension of Mind into the environment. Watersheds focus on the mixing of water and land, the process whereby landscape is moulded, soils are moved around and nutrients cycled to plants and us. . . .

When the total watershed remains in physical balance, nutrients like water and soils are detained longer on the land. The soils, in certain climates, build and retain more moisture, further detaining water and, simultaneously, encouraging Life. The built-up soils have increased nutrient storage sites and the biogeochemical cycle loops more, keeping the chemicals as richer, lingering life before, like everything else, we stream on out to sky to land and seas. . . .

What happens when you read such material? The streams by which we survive even though they now pour through pipes instead of channels sculpted in the earth—take on a more intimate reality; not quite an I-Thou relation is established, but water is recognized as the blood of the earth, which becomes part of our blood, too. No more a colorless "thing."

Mr. Warshall conducted a Watershed Quiz, putting to several people questions such as: Where does your water come from, and where does it go? What is the name of the Watershed where you live? Some knew the answers quite well, a bit embarrassing to the rest of us. Knowing where our water comes from may be of great importance. What might happen, for example, if the present drought in California continues for several more years? This last question makes you wonder if vast numbers of people should ever be concentrated in what are naturally desert regions. If a Southern Californian goes on with this inquiry, he will learn the shameful story of how it happens that Los Angeles gets a great deal of its water from the Owens River, and what this meant, years ago, for the farmers in the Owens Valley, where irrigation came to a stop. Water supply isn't just hydrodynamics or geophysics, it's the life-blood of the social community. Do cities in desert areas survive on transfusions from unwilling rural donors?

Good reading to go with this issue of *CoEvolution* would be Ed Marston's *The Dynamic Environment*, which instructs in how the technology of urban water supply alters the face of the country. In a summarizing paper Prof. Marston says:

The evolution of urban water systems illustrates how one technological step—an improvement at the time—can create new problems which require new technology. Construction of urban water systems permitted cities to seal the land with asphalt and buildings and to become more densely populated. The sealing led to urban Hoods, since the ground no longer absorbed or braked flowing rain water. In

response, another improvement—storm sewers—was introduced to remove the water from the streets. But the sewers dumped that water all at once in the now inadequate local streams and rivers. To handle these newly created flows (the peak-hour problem) required that the local waterways be straightened, deepened, and lined with concrete to increase flow and prevent flooding. Many waterways were eventually encased in pipes, in effect becoming sewer mains. So when urban areas reached out to distant watersheds, they doomed their own local streams and rivers.

What this means, in the long run, is described by another contributor to *CoEvolution Quarterly*, Robert R. Curry, who teaches at the University of Montana. Speaking of the consequences of adapting a watershed system to urban necessities, he says:

Floods become bigger and more frequent. This is so because the passage of water into the rivers is faster and the watershed shape cannot adjust to equalize the rate of energy utilization all along the drainage network, so flooding and sediment movement increase to locally balance the system.

The attempts of the drainage network (now pipes, gutters as well as streams), river channels and cement aqueducts and hillslopes (both pavement and soil) to re-equilibrate may progress for centuries. Parts of the Susquehanna watershed have been rapidly urbanized. Recently, following a rare but not unpredictable incursion of a tropical hurricane, sudden catastrophe ensued. A single [once in a] 100-year rainfall yielded a [once in a] 1000-year flood. Eastern U.S. flood victims defined and zoned floodplain areas based on a historic record of flooding that no longer bears much direct causal relationship to suburban land use in the Susquehanna watershed. No wonder they feel eligible to apply for disaster relief funds. Similarly, the Big Thompson Canyon in Colorado has experienced a flood of inestimable "rarity" of on the order of a one-in-ten-thousand-year event associated with only a once-in-300-or-so-year precipitation intensity following the paving and urbanization of a critical part of that watershed adjacent to Rocky Mountain National Park.

Next in *CQ* comes quotation from John Wesley Powell, first American to explore and travel the Colorado River in a boat, with illustrations from his book (reprinted by Dover), an account of his life and work, and an invitation

to any publishers among *CQ* readers to restore to print Powell's influential—but not influential enough—*Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States* (made to Congress in 1878, which led to the establishment of the U.S. Geological Survey). *Arid Lands* was published by Harvard University Press in 1962, but is now out of print.

Warshall calls it "the most beautiful environmental impact report ever written," adding:

Various historians have compared *Arid Lands* to *The Federalist*. *Arid Lands* is definitely accurate prophecy. The basic soul of the European-American experience in North America lurks among the pages. Just the first 45 pages changed national consciousness by rubbing American illusions of the West against strong clear descriptions of the Colorado plateau and the Great Deserts.

It becomes plain from quotation from Wallace Stegner's book on Powell that he was advocating watershed regionalism, with the West organized into "hydrographic basins which would be virtually self-governing and hence able to negotiate with other similar basins, as well as to control their own watersheds clear to the drainage divides."

Part of a chapter of a forthcoming book, *Water in Environmental Planning*, by Thomas Dunne and Luna Leopold, invites readers to learn how to tell whether a stream is sick or well. An observant person can make a sound if rudimentary diagnosis by sampling the algae, bacterial, and diatom population. A half hour of study will do it for a stream 75 feet wide, using a hand lens to identify the biotic forms. In a healthy stream there is a low but diverse population of living things, with plenty of insects. The sick water is likely to have much blue-green algae, snails, flatworms, and submerged plants. "If there are no submerged plants and many insects of various kinds [Dragonflies, Mayflies, Stoneflies, and Caddisflies, best identified by their larvae on rocks], then your diagnosis lies in the upper or healthy part of the key, not in the polluted or toxic part."

The concluding paragraph of an article on forests and human purpose, by Roy A. Rappaport, illustrates the kind of thinking that needs to become natural to us all:

The problem of how we may live in harmony with our forests is the problem of controlling men's narrow and linear purposes so that they will not destroy the circular ecosystems to which contemporary humans remain as indissolubly bound as were their ancestors of a million years ago. If we are to live in harmony with our forests and other ecosystems we must restore and maintain their circular ecological structure. Such restoration and maintenance in turn requires the circular structure in our social and political systems so that the feedback of information concerning the states of social and ecological variables from the public and from the environment to regulatory agencies is assured. The problem of how to live harmoniously with our forests is not a problem in forestry. It is, rather, a set of social, economic political, conceptual and even ideological problems. Their solutions are not to be sought through simple changes in forestry practices. They are to be found in changes in the organization of our thought and of our society.

This is either an emergent or implicit theme throughout *CoEvolution Quarterly* (\$2.50 an issue, \$8.00 a year—Box 428, Sausalito, Calif. 94965).

COMMENTARY

UNWRITTEN RULES WERE BETTER

IF you apply the questions Ron Jones lists in *Your City Has Been Kidnapped* (see "Children") to the problems the public school teachers in the Santa Monica (Calif.) Unified School District have experienced in trying to get a contract with the School Board, you find out some interesting if discouraging things.

Who, for example, made the rule which in effect created these problems?

The State Legislature in Sacramento, by passing the Rodda Act.

Who benefits?

Nobody, apparently.

As a result of the Rodda Act, teachers now have opportunity to participate in collective bargaining about pay, working conditions, and curriculum, etc. Did the teachers want this? Some of them probably did—if the obligations of the Board are put down in black and white with the force of law, this might add some security for teachers and some benefit to children.

The fact, however, is that before passage of the Rodda Act reasonable agreements between teachers and school boards were reached with little friction. No one, at any rate, complained bitterly.

But now practically everyone is complaining bitterly. There is no contract, while negotiations proceed slowly if at all. The Act, incidentally, does not make a contract mandatory, but only permits one. What has happened, quite evidently, is that the Rodda Act has saturated the relations between teachers and the community with the adversary attitudes typical of industrial-labor encounters. The feelings of mutual suspicion and distrust characteristic of labor disputes have been invited or made practically inevitable by a law doubtless passed with good intentions.

Once upon a time the teachers and the school board administrators sat down and worked things out for the common good. But now the Santa Monica District School Board has hired an expert "negotiator" to meet with the teachers' representatives. Once the element of trust was paramount in arriving at agreement. Now the element of distrust prevails, and is probably reinforced by touchy dialogue concerning the details which have to be spelled out in a legal contract. Minute definition of relations that can prosper only through mutual trust seems a project in self-defeat. Now both teachers and school board will have to rise to great heights simply to achieve what was once a matter of common sense. This seems a pity. The teachers may finally get a contract, but only after everyone involved is really worn out.

There are some relations in life which cannot survive without trust. The relations of teacher with children, of teachers with community, are such relations. Here is a case where the moral of "small is beautiful" seems self-evident.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves A CLOGGED-UP DREAM

IN Your City Has Been Kidnapped, the "textbook" Ron Jones put together for highschool students, there is a part with these questions:

- What rules do you encounter in the street, buildings, parks, and institutions of your city?
- Who makes these rules?
- Who benefits from these rules?
- What unwritten rules exist in your city?

No youngster who takes these questions seriously will get very far without considerable exercise of his imagination. What is the value of this? The sparkle of a mind with an awakened imagination needs no justification, but we might go further and suggest that the natural work of the imagination is the making of *wholes*. This is what an artist does: he makes wholes. If art has a moral dimension, it grows out of this aspect of the artist's work.

A book we have been reading, a collection of the writings of J. B. Jackson, the founder and for years the editor of *Landscape*, seems filled with invitation to this sort of thinking. When Mr. Jackson looks at a town, a city, or rural section, he may tell you what he sees, or he may read each scene as though it were a page of history. Throughout the land he recognizes the influence of Thomas Jefferson, who based his thinking about the future of America on the principle: "The country produces more virtuous citizens." Even in Jefferson's time, people thought about planning:

The National Survey of 1785 was not merely inspired by Jefferson, it was a clear expression of the Jeffersonian dislike of a powerful government, centralized in cities, and the emphasis on the small rural landowner. The survey permitted and even encouraged the forming of townships with the school section in the center, townships with their own local government; but it made no provision for cities. Jefferson had tried his hand at helping design the national capital. His sketches, proposing an extensive grid with the land divided into uniform lots, were scornfully rejected by l'Enfant, who had something

more monumental in mind. But aside from one or two notable exceptions Detroit, Baton Rouge, and Indianapolis—the cities built in the United States until late in the nineteenth century all conformed to the grid system; all were Jeffersonian.

It is both enriching and cautioning to realize that, all over the country, the community arrangements stand for the hopes and dreams of men who lived two hundred years ago. There are no narrow alleys with forbidding terminations, but a deliberate openness in American towns. Mr. Jackson continues:

If, in terms of design, our cities are little more than extensions of a village grid, the village itself—except in the older parts of the country—is in turn little more than a fragment of the regional grid: an orderly arrangement of uniform lots frequently focussed about a public square with no particular function and unvarying dimensions. The block, whether in Chicago or New Paris, Iowa, remains the basic unit, and the block is nothing more than a specific number of small holdings. For all its monotony, the Jeffersonian design has unmistakable Utopian traits: it is in fact the blueprint for an agrarian equalitarian society, and it is based on the assumption that the landowner will be active in the democratic process. The grid system, as originally conceived, was thus a device for the promotion of "virtuous citizens." Its survival is a testimony to the belief, once so common among Americans, in the possibility of human perfectibility. So it was not only logical, but appropriate, that the grid, despite its obvious shortcomings and its abuse by speculators, should have remained the characteristic national design for the environment. It is, to repeat, the symbol of an agrarian Utopia composed of a democratic society of small landowners.

This seems a useful way to interpret the anatomy of American cities, towns, and communities to see in them dreams of the past as well as evidence of their present corruption. Looking at the man-made scene in this spirit also makes for a certain tolerance—who knows what dreams in the present, however earnestly conceived, will go awry long before their promise unfolds? And it helps to give planners pause.

Meanwhile, we recall the response of Jean-Paul Sartre to American towns and cities.

Something of Jefferson's hope seemed to come through to this distinguished French visitor:

Our beautiful closed [European] cities, full as eggs, are a bit stifling. Our slanting, winding streets run head on against walls and houses; once you are inside the city, you can no longer see beyond it. In America, these long, straight unobstructed streets carry one's glance, like canals, outside the city. You always see mountains or fields or seas at the end of them, no matter where you may be . . . these slight cities . . . reveal the other side of the United States: their freedom. Here everyone is free—not to criticize or to reform their customs—but to flee them, to leave for the desert or another city. The cities are open, open to the world, and to the future. This is what gives them their adventurous look and, even in their ugliness and disorder, a touching beauty.

A very subjective account of American cities, one may say; yet Sartre is not a sentimental man, and the combination of American places and people made him feel this way about the cities. Who will say that the qualities he described are not there at all?

Another of Mr. Jackson's essays is called "Two Street Scenes." He contrasts two "Main Streets," telling first about one where—

A tide of buses and trucks and passenger cars, usually five abreast, surges through the heart of the city at twenty to twenty-five miles an hour, eight hours a day. The authorities hope to increase this speed by one means or another. Meanwhile they have installed clusters of overhead traffic lights, equipped with gongs, at every intersection. The sidewalk corners have been chained off to prevent pedestrians from crossing diagonally. Jaywalkers are handed summonses by the police and in addition are given a brief memorized sermon on the hazards of crossing against the lights.

The other Main Street is in a town Mr. Jackson is glad to name—Santa Fe, New Mexico. There—

At three P.M. the high school stages a homecoming celebration in the form of a parade twice the length of Main Street and once around the square. Twenty-five cars, six trucks with bands or floats and adorned with aggressive slogans alternate with groups of cheering and singing students. The parade passes at ten miles an hour; the air reeks of scorched brake

linings and exhaust. An even younger public watches enviously from the sidewalk. While this is going on all the traffic comes to a dead stop. Drivers wait with a greater or lesser degree of patience and goodwill, but they wait, and whether they relish it or not for the time being they are involved in the life of the community. . . . Far from being subdued when the work day is done, Main Street and the Square are at their liveliest from five o'clock on, and what's more, the life is chiefly pedestrian.

The contrast is "between those communities which with the best of intentions have allowed their streets to be used and planned almost exclusively for heavy and rapid through traffic, and a community where the streets are still common property, still a part of the living space of every citizen." How was this wonderful exception arranged?

Many factors have helped preserve this kind of communal life in Santa Fe. The city fathers have had nothing to do with it . . . it is lucky in possessing a population which is gregarious, and at the same time hostile to police regulation, and which remains loyal to a long-established tradition of group pleasures. Yet something of this color and vitality could be introduced to many other American cities; it is merely a matter of establishing (or re-establishing) the principle that streets are not intended solely for motor traffic but were made for any and every kind of outdoor group activity, from children's games to funeral processions and endless loitering in the sun. All civic architecture is essentially nothing but an appropriate background for this life; and city planning is chiefly justified when it helps preserve and foster informal communal activities.

Mr. Jackson writes, no doubt, for planners and designers, but more essentially he writes for the designer in each one of us. *Landscape* is edited by Ervin H. Zube and published by the University of Massachusetts Press at \$8.00 (paper, \$3.50)

FRONTIERS

Some Uncommon Sense

JUST about everybody in the United States remembers the increase in the price of oil which came in 1973, but hardly anyone knows that in the following year the "developing nations," inspired by this event, got together and obtained passage by the United Nations General Assembly of a series of resolutions declaring a New International Economic Order—NIEO.

There is no novelty in this ignorance. People remember things that affect their lives, not the rhetoric of diplomats. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was able to multiply the price of oil by four, and getting what they asked for made an enormous impression on the rest of the world. Commenting on the wave of resentment in America, then and now, Joseph Harsch said recently (in the *Christian Science Monitor* for Dec. 30):

It seems to me that this is a classic case of trying to make someone else the scapegoat for one's own folly.

First of all, what is wrong with raising the price of a scarce commodity when the demand goes up? What American businessman in the position of the Arabs wouldn't do precisely the same? Oil is a scarce commodity. Its supply is limited. At present rates of rising consumption it would be all gone within another 20 to 30 years. The Arabs don't want to run out of oil. It is almost their only resource. Raising the price is one way of trying to stretch out what they have. They are probably foolish to be selling it as fast and as cheaply as they are.

This is one brand of common sense. Some people in the New England Regional Office of the American Friends Service Committee have attempted to put together a kit of study materials embodying another kind of sense, mostly uncommon, using the UN Declaration of a New International Economic Order as a foundation.

What did the Declaration say? It called for changes in trade and other relations which would give the developing nations at least a chance at

self-sufficiency. Attracting particular objection from the United States were two provisions:

—The right of countries to nationalize foreign-owned property, while paying compensation according to domestic, rather than international, law.

—The right of countries to form producers' associations similar to OPEC.

The Declaration asked specifically for measures to "correct inequalities and redress existing injustices, make it possible to eliminate the widening gap between the developed and developing countries and ensure steadily accelerating economic and social development and peace and justice for present and future generations."

Included in the AFSC study kit is a recent statement by an Egyptian, Ismail-Sabri Abdalla, director of the Institute of National Planning in Cairo, which gives the background of the thinking of these peoples. He said:

How many times have the nations that obtained political independence thought that they had come out of the tunnel in the solemn moment when they lowered the foreign flag and replaced it with their national colours? Two decades of development have disillusioned them. They discovered that the physical fight against foreign troops, whatever the bloodshed, was easier than the fight for economic independence against the multiform and sometimes non-physical presence of the multinationals, which distort their development and encourage them to integrate into the world capitalist system in a position of growing subordination, without reducing the distance between rich and poor on either the national or the international level. These are things of which the people of the Third World today are no longer unaware.

First of all, the fact is that our underdevelopment is nothing, but the other result, the other side of the coin, of the process of the development of world capitalism itself. . . . In the second place, we are more and more aware of another reality: the market mechanisms always function to the detriment of our interests. In the abstract model of perfect competition, all marginal producers are bound to disappear. This was even boasted about by the supporters of laissez-faire as a guarantee of efficiency through the survival of the fittest. Now the countries

of the Third World are, generally speaking, among the least fit. Furthermore, the capitalist structure is now far from the original model and for many decades has been based on monopoly or oligopoly.

Thirdly, the Third World is becoming increasingly aware that the type of development imposed on it is neither realistic nor desirable. It is the worst type of dependence: intellectual dependence. We have accepted the historical pattern of the West as unique, we have identified progress with the European-American way of life. . . . I believe that it is the duty of all honest and conscientious intellectuals to cry out loud that the average citizen of the Third World will never know the present level of affluence of the average American. Such a level is not only the consequence of the work carried out by the American society, but also the historical result of the exploitation of the whole of mankind. Furthermore, it implies such a waste of unrenewable resources that it cannot be guaranteed to all.

Finally, it is not sure whether this unrestrained competition has helped man to blossom, to find happiness. On the other hand, the Western model destroys the physical and cultural environment. . . .

From all the above, it is possible to understand the deep meaning of the Third World's present action: the struggle for economic decolonization, and it is easy to imagine the powerful interests against which it has to fight.

This is not a familiar sort of reading matter for the American public, which may be one good reason why the workers of the New England American Friends Service Committee have compiled a series of study materials (enough to make a good-sized book) concerned with the problems and aspirations of the have-not nations around the world. The kit provides articles on world economic conditions, some factual, some critical, some offering ways of bringing about changes that would affect the lives of all for good. The title is *The New International Economic Order* and the price by mail is \$3.00, with a reduction on more than ten copies. Write: New England AFSC, 48 Inman Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

The kit has three sections: One on world conditions, one on multinationals and world resources, and one on non-violent economics.

The third section will probably prove the most interesting and useful to readers since its content is concerned with practical matters such as intermediate technology, land trusts, and energy conservation and alternatives.