

FRAMEWORKS OF PERCEPTION

THERE are today two kinds of serious writers, the ones who with confidence focus on what they regard as the achievements of Western civilization in the past, and those who have serious doubts about the claims for these achievements. The achievements are everywhere evident and have given our time the characteristic stamp of material power and convenience. Yet we also live in a time of danger and anxiety, of poverty for more than half the population of the world, and of rising discontent which is now finding articulate expression. One of the present-day writers who is filled with doubts, Keith Buchanan, recently wrote for the International Foundation for Development Alternatives (in Switzerland) a brief essay, "The World's Different Peoples," which calls into question our idea of "progress." He proposes something which seems obvious enough—that we view our world through a "cultural construct" which has evolved over centuries, so that "the world perceived by a Briton from Manchester is very different from that perceived by a Chinese from Hong Kong; that perceived by an Asian peasant very different from that perceived by an American businessman."

Naturally, we assent. But then Buchanan adds:

. . . while most other cultures are "cultures of totalities," Western culture is a "culture of fragmentation." This fragmentation of problems and processes into discrete units for study and analysis was an essential element in the "scientific method"—but involved the gradual loss of the capability to conceptualize in totalities. Yet many of the major issues of our time demand just such a capability. Development, for example, is not just simply a case of gearing up the economic machine so that each person shall *have more* but also of promoting those profound social and political changes which will make it possible for each to *be more*, and if "development" is regarded with skepticism by some peoples it is because they have learnt to distrust the expert's obsession with what is to them only part of the process.

Whole cultures, past and present, may move on assumptions radically different from ours, and some of them can hardly be spoken of as "primitive," having very different customs growing out of convictions involving post-mortem beliefs about themselves and all mankind. The value system of the Buddhists, for example, gives them purposes and meanings in life antithetical to ours. E. F. Schumacher called attention to this in *Small Is Beautiful*:

No one seems to think that a Buddhist way of life would call for Buddhist economics, just as the modern materialist way of life has brought forth modern economics.

Economists themselves, like most specialists, normally suffer from a kind of metaphysical blindness, assuming theirs is a science of absolute and invariable truths, without any presuppositions. Some go so far as to claim that economic laws are as free from "metaphysics" or "values" as the law of gravitation. While the materialist is mainly interested in goods, the Buddhist is mainly interested in liberation. But Buddhism is "The Middle Way" and therefore in no way antagonistic to physical well-being. It is not wealth that stands in the way of liberation but the attachment to wealth; not the enjoyment of pleasurable things but the craving for them. The keynote of Buddhist economics, therefore, is simplicity and non-violence. From an economist's point of view the marvel of the Buddhist way of life is the utter rationality of its pattern—amazingly small means leading to extraordinarily satisfactory results. . . .

It is in the light of both immediate experience and long-term prospects that the study of Buddhist economics could be recommended even to those who believe that economic growth is more important than any spiritual or religious values. For it is not a question of choosing between "modern growth" and "traditional stagnation." It is a question of finding the right path of development, the Middle Way between materialistic heedlessness and traditional immobility, in short, of finding "Right Livelihood."

Buchanan's point is that we in the West have been more or less blinded by our material success, which has led us to think that other peoples with other goals are backward and unconcerned with the kind of progress we have been able to achieve. But today, the increasing breakdowns of this progress, the way in which it now seems to turn against itself, is gradually opening our minds, despite the habits of pride and arrogance our driving technical ability has given us. As Buchanan puts it:

The very specialized, fragmented vision which has characterized much of Western thought since the waning of the Renaissance was an important factor in the scientific progress of the last four centuries. It has been a spectacular progress but we sometimes overlook that, because it became increasingly production-oriented, it has been a very uneven progress. We have learnt much about matter—but our knowledge of man and of how societies function is far more fragmentary; it can be argued that peoples regarded by the North as "less developed," even "backward," demonstrate in the complex ordering of their societies a greater understanding of man than the more sophisticated machine-civilizations of the so-called "developed" nations. Yet we are sometimes inclined to forget this and to assume that the North's scientific achievements give the understanding necessary to prescribe solutions to the major human problems of our time. We tend not only to overlook the errors of judgment in even the less complex fields of, say, engineering or biological science which have had important, even disastrous, ecological or social repercussions (such as the Aswan high dam or the indiscriminate use of pesticides such as DDT); what is worse, we fail to see them for what they are—and that is glaring examples of inadequacy and, indeed, the dangers of a partial vision, however sophisticated.

Like the worlds of other peoples, the world of the industrialized societies is a cultural construct and its shape has been flawed by the inadequacy of this partial vision. Because *we* are accustomed to it, because it is not easy to imagine any other world, we do not recognize this flawing. It is only when we face the problem of understanding other peoples, only when we attempt to "aid" them—or ourselves—by exporting the techniques and the values we believe "work" in our society, that we begin to perceive the extent of this flawing and to realize that in many societies the obvious truths and seemingly self-evident values of our world have little relevance or are, at best, only part of the story. . . .

Our attitude toward the land—to get what we can out of it, with little concern for the land itself—results in what is happening to agriculture, leading to recognition of our own changes in attitude over a period of years. As Buchanan says:

Rights of use, on which the medieval economy rested, gave place to rights of ownership and land became something that could be bought and sold. This trend toward individual ownership and commercialization did not at first lead to the exploitation and soil-mining which characterizes much so-called advanced agriculture for, as Wendell Berry has stressed, there "existed yeoman or peasant or artisan classes, whose birthright was the fundamental skills of earth-keeping. . . . As long as these classes and their traditions were strong, there was at least the hope that the world would be well used."

In the title essay of *The Gift of Good Land*, cited here by Keith Buchanan, Berry sets out in the Judeo-Christian heritage "a doctrine such as that the Buddhists call 'right livelihood' or 'right occupation'." He does very well with his search, showing that the gift of the Lord to the Israelites in the Land of Canaan laid on them the obligation to care for it *properly*, which demands both charity and skill. No one, he points out, is able to practice charity unless he has skill. And, he says, "In order to be good, you have to know how—and this knowing is vast, complex, humble and humbling; it is of the mind and of the hands, of neither alone."

The divine mandate to use the world justly and charitably then, defines every person's moral predicament as that of a steward. But this predicament is hopeless and meaningless unless it produces an appropriate discipline: stewardship. And stewardship is hopeless and meaningless unless it involves long-term courage, perseverance, devotion, and skill. This skill is not to be confused with any accomplishment or grace of spirit or of intellect. It has to do with everyday proprieties in the practical use and care of created things—with "right livelihood."

If "the earth is the Lord's" and we are his stewards, then obviously some livelihoods are "right" and some are not. Is there, for instance, any such thing as a Christian strip mine? A Christian atomic bomb? A Christian nuclear power plant or a radioactive waste dump? What might be the design

of a Christian transportation or sewer system? Does not Christianity imply limitations on the scale of technology, architecture, and land holding? Is it Christian to profit or otherwise benefit from violence? Is there not, in Christian ethics, an implied requirement of practical separation from a destructive or wasteful economy? Do not Christian values require the enactment of a distinction between an organization and a community? . . . Organizations and even communities cannot hope to answer these questions until individuals have begun to answer them.

As anyone can see, it will take considerable spunk to answer these questions individually. Even a kind of heroism. And, as Berry says, the poets and storytellers of the Christian tradition "have tended to be interested in the extraordinary actions of 'great men'—actions unique in grandeur, such as may occur only once in the history of the world."

Ordinary behavior belongs to a different dramatic mode, a different understanding of action, even a different understanding of virtue. The drama of heroism raises above all the issue of physical and moral courage: Does the hero have, in extreme circumstances, the courage to obey,—to perform the task, the sacrifice, the resistance, the pilgrimage he is called to perform? The drama of ordinary or daily behavior also raises the issue of courage, but it raises at the same time in a more complex and difficult way the issue of perseverance. It may, in some ways, be easier to be Samson than to be a good husband or wife day after day for fifty years.

So, at the end of this essay, Berry says:

The great study of stewardship, then, is

. . . to know

that which before us lies in daily life

and to be practiced and prepared "in things that most concern." The angel is talking about good work, which is to talk about skill. In the loss of skill we lose stewardship; in losing stewardship we lose fellowship; we become outcasts from the great neighborhood of Creation. It is possible—as our experience in this good land shows—to exile ourselves from Creation, and to ally ourselves with the principle of destruction—which is, ultimately, the principle of nonentity. It is to be willing *in general* for beings to not-be. And once we have allied ourselves with that principle, we are foolish to think that we can control the results. The "regulation" of abominations is a modern governmental exercise that

never succeeds. If we are willing to pollute the air—to harm the elegant creature known as the atmosphere—by that token we are willing to harm all creatures that breathe, ourselves and our children among them. There is no begging off or "trading off." You cannot affirm the power plant and condemn the smokestack, or affirm the smoke and condemn the cough.

This is not to suggest that we can live harmlessly, or strictly at our own expense; we depend upon other creatures and survive by their deaths. To live, we must daily break the body and shed the blood of Creation. When we do it ignorantly, greedily, clumsily, destructively, it is a desecration. In such desecration we condemn ourselves to spiritual and moral loneliness, and others to want.

What will change cost the Western world? It will cost pain of thinking, of realizing that we are not infallible because of our technical and economic achievements, impressive as they are, or have been. It may be impossible for Third World people to think as we do. Those who do are those who have had a Western education, which dispossessed them of their traditional cultural attitudes, making them victims of cultural imperialism. Buchanan quotes a man who understands this process:

Mahbub ul Haq, speaking as a citizen of the Third World comments on the emptiness of national independence "unless political liberation is followed by economic and intellectual liberation." The need for such liberation arises from the fact that "many of us are prisoners of our own past training and somebody else's thought." Senator Jovito R. Salonga commented, of his countrymen: "Filipinos are now living imported lives."

In these remarks we can see another factor contributing to the inability of the peoples of the industrialized nations to understand the nature of Third World realities. For many Third World "spokesmen" are, as Fanon noted long ago, the products of a long program of intellectual colonization. They see the world, including their own world, through the distorting lens of the Center's pattern of thought. Until such spokesmen break the hold of this colonization and begin to look at the world from the standpoint of Third World value systems—or until the masses displace them as irrelevant—we shall know little of the hopes and the aspirations of that two-thirds of humanity whom Fanon described as "the wretched of the earth."

What can be said in behalf of the West? Well, we do have the power of self-criticism. We have the imagination to see how different things could be, or made different, by adopting as working hypotheses the views of such men as Wendell Berry, and other thinkers of our time. Who are the really great humans of the twentieth century? As we come toward its end, we become able to list them, naming, say, Gandhi, Lewis Mumford, Simone Weil, Theodore Roszak, Hannah Arendt, Ortega y Gasset, Wes Jackson, and Wendell Berry, and no doubt a few others we haven't happened to come across yet. These are the envisioners of the right kind of tomorrow, minds able to look back and forward, to give pith and substance to the ideals they propose. Yet they are not captive to either the past, the present, or the future, to either pessimism or optimism, but are free minds—free to at least dream of what may prove right. They are not, in Hannah Arendt's words "the helpless slaves, not so much of our machines as of our know-how, thoughtless creatures at the mercy of every gadget which is technologically possible, no matter how murderous it is."

This "know-how" view of progress and even civilization is indeed a blight on our relations with the so-called Third World, which seems to admire and at the same time resent our material achievements. As Keith Buchanan says:

It is important that we recognize the many forms development may take; it is important, too, that we rid ourselves of the assumption that the process of development has only one possible end-product—and that it is the type of society with which we ourselves are familiar. And perhaps, if it is possible, we should try to find alternatives to the very terms "developed," "underdeveloped," and "developing," for these, as commonly used, serve merely to perpetuate the idea that the only yardstick by which a nation's progress can be measured is the machine-civilization of the North. Such terminology mystifies the whole development process and at the same time perpetuates the idea of an international hierarchy in which the Third World is cast in the role of an aspiring but junior partner.

As Richard Hensman observes ironically: "The assumption that untutored peoples may choose to create a modern world other than Euroamerica, an

efficient social system conceived and organized in a radically different way, appears to present several problems of understanding."

One reason for this difficulty lies in the different meanings words carry for different people. To the majority of folk in the Center their once privileged role in the Third World, their monopolization of its major resources and their possession there of hundreds of military bases was, and sometimes still is, regarded as "normal." It was also "normal" that the Third World nations should enjoy no reciprocal rights in the nations of the Center; the dismay caused by OPEC investment policies is instructive in this respect. Similarly, the concept of stability is, as Hensman reminds us, "viewed rather differently by those non-visible, submerged elements in society at whose expense it is maintained from the way in which it is presented by sociologists who regard what already exists as social order and what threatens it as disorder. . . ."

Because of this use of the Center's concepts and stereotypes to express the new and often complex realities of Third World societies, our view of such societies is either hazy or distorted by this prism of language. Our view is further distorted, sometimes deliberately, by the continuing domination by the center of information channels, ranging from press agencies to the various media. Most of what we learn about the Third World, most of what Third World countries learn about other Third World countries, comes from the press agencies and media of the Center; these become, in the words of Juan Somavia, "arbiters of existing reality" for it is they who determine what is news. This they do in the light of the political and economic interests of the Center and the reality they claim to present is further distorted by the use of "labels, adjectives and persuasive definitions to stigmatize targets of the system."

Recognizing these forms of self-deception is largely an unpracticed art in our time, or in any time. Yet we have writers who are beginning to do it very well.

REVIEW

THE LAW OF THE SEA

HARVEST HOUSE in Montreal, publisher in fine paperbacks of the essays of Thoreau, is responsible for putting into print Elisabeth Mann Borgese's book, *The Future of the Oceans*, which came out last year (paperback, \$9.95). Professor Borgese wrote it in response to the request of Aurelio Peccei, late President of the Club of Rome. She teaches at Dalhousie University in Halifax and has written several books about oceans and ocean life. *The Future of the Oceans* tells about various discoveries that have recently been made in the oceans, all of considerable importance. In his Foreword, Alexander King, now president of the Club of Rome, points out:

In recent years interest in the seas has accelerated greatly fostered by three reasons. First, the findings of both physical and biological oceanography have advanced to the point that we now have a coherent, detailed picture of the oceans and their creatures. Indeed, we can now envision the planetary system as a whole, as well as the relations between land, sea, and the atmosphere, and the climatic consequences of their interactions. Undersea exploration has yielded a fascinating and even awesome picture of the geoprocesses in operation over eons. The continental drift and inexorable moving of the tectonic plates represent geophysical and geochemical forces on a scale far greater than that of our experience on the land surface. Likewise, undersea exploration has exposed completely new biological systems. For example, the recent discovery of oases in the desert of the deep sea—the Pacific trough westward of the Galapagos Islands—totally separated from the rest of organic nature and to which no light penetrates and hence no photosynthesis is possible, is one of the most dramatic findings of recent years. This discovery indicates the presence of thermal seepages from the earth's interior, carrying not only heat but also many chemical elements to the ocean's depths, and the emergence of strange species which appear to have adapted to life on a sulphur metabolism.

Prof. Borgese begins her book by calling attention to the fact that the present intensive study of the oceans was first advocated nearly twenty years ago by the Government of Malta, the second smallest

member of the United Nations. Malta proposed a UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. This was adopted.

The Convention declares the seabed and its resources beyond the limits of national jurisdiction to be the common heritage of mankind, establishes the International Sea-Bed Authority to manage this common heritage for the benefit of all, provides a general framework for other uses of the seas, introduces a comprehensive international environmental law, and creates a binding dispute settlement system.

While much of this book is devoted to an account of the UN conferences to work out the provisions of the Law of the Sea, it soon becomes evident that the author's interest lies in developing the conception of the common heritage. She sees in the new Law of the Sea a recognition that the problems of the oceans must be considered as a whole, calling for—

. . . a special application of an insight first gained by Buddha 2,500 years ago and most recently articulated by systems theory: "As a net is made up by a series of knots," Buddha taught, "so everything in this world is connected by a series of knots. If anyone thinks that the mesh of the net is an independent, isolated thing, he is mistaken."

One exciting discovery early in the 1980s was of "massive polymetallic sulfide deposits on the East Pacific Rise, the Galapagos Ridge, and the Juan de Fuca Ridge. A sea scientist has said that these deposits contain 11 per cent copper and minor constituents of silver, lead, molybdenum, and tin. Since the deposits were only a century old, the promise of future resources of this sort is substantial, making these elements seem to be a renewable resource. Also of interest is the explanation now available of El Niño:

Traditionally thought to be simply a local phenomenon off the Peruvian and Ecuadorian coasts that temporarily halted the upwelling of cold, nutritious bottom waters on which fish and bird life depends, El Niño is now recognized as having worldwide ramifications. This then is just one more illustration of the need for a global, comprehensive view of the world ocean, where problems are closely interrelated and must be considered as a whole.

Investigations of the phenomenon of El Niño have revealed that the well-being of Peruvian fishermen is in fact linked to autumnal low-pressure regions in Indonesia and Australia, which generate the trade winds. These winds drive surface water from the equatorial Pacific in the direction of Australia, raising the water level in these regions. To compensate, cold bottom water flows in the opposite direction and is forced up along the eastern rim of the Pacific. Thus one can envisage these winds driving and turning the South Pacific like an enormous wheel.

When the low-pressure zones in Australia and Indonesia fail to materialize, the wheel stops and surface waters begin to warm. Sometimes the wind even blows in the opposite direction, piling up warm surface waters near the Peruvian coast.

One can imagine the global impact of changes of this magnitude. Their links to monsoons in Southeast Asia, droughts in Australia and in the Sahel, grain production in North America, and storms in Europe have been demonstrated over the past two years, as El Niño of 1982-1983 was the largest recorded in 150 years.

Aquaculture, or the cultivation of fish as a food product, is another innovation that is taking hold. Experience has shown, Prof. Borgese says, that time is required to overcome obstacles in the form of inertia at several levels—in the market, in capital for investment, and in management, but when a new technology has captured about 5 per cent of the market, it may eventually take over.

Aquaculture has now taken over 15 per cent of the market, and thus it is safe to predict that it will supersede the hunting and gathering stage, just as agriculture did on land. This is not to say that the oceans will be divided into neat little fenced seafarms. Rather, there will be human intervention at least once, and probably more often, in the life cycle of all commercially harvested species.

Nor is it to say that this development should signify the end of catching fish in the open ocean. Capture will increasingly be part of a more complex process and it will always be preceded by culture. Capture will be just a phase of aquaculture.

One very good reason for more aquaculture is the world's need for more food. While food shortages and undernourishment are more due to poor distribution than to actual shortages, poor

countries often rely more on fish than on meat. For this reason, increased production of fish through aquaculture would plainly help to solve the problem of hunger. And there is ample space for its development.

In the closing chapter of her book, "The Philosophy of the Common Heritage," the author speaks of the things she cares about most. In working on the foundation and development of the law of the sea, the necessity of thinking in terms of the common heritage, instead of the idea of individual or national ownership, became evident to her and her colleagues. This indicated the need for a change in the fundamental philosophy of the West. Prof. Borgese says:

The industrial revolution . . . was and is inextricably rooted in Western philosophy and religion. It rests, ultimately, on the particular belief that man is the overlord of nature, and that nature is the servant of mankind. The divine right and God-given power to subject nature and to kill, maim, and exterminate nonhuman life are hardly conducive to a policy of conservation of nature.

It is true that Franciscan love for God's creatures derives from this Occidental tradition as well as the doctrines of the struggles for survival and human supremacy. But it was this latter doctrine, not Franciscan philosophy, that gave rise to modern civilization and the spirit of ruthless domination over nature.

It is also true that people closer to nature, having a philosophical tradition of continuity and contiguity with nature and professing nature-friendly philosophies, have trodden on one another ruthlessly in fanatic racial and religious altercations. They have done—and keep doing—this, however, not because of, but in spite of, their philosophy.

If the seas and oceans must be used exclusively for peaceful purposes, it is the duty of educational institutions everywhere to instill the idea, from early childhood on, that the seas and oceans are *zones of peace*. . . . A sustained educational effort is needed to ensure that our whole attitude toward the ocean will change, informed by a new concept of the interrelation between the individual and the intranational and international order and between the socioeconomic order and nature.

COMMENTARY

DOES EVOLUTION HAVE PURPOSE?

HAVING the good fortune to have copies of the papers presented at a recent conference—the conference was titled "Toward a Post-Modern World" and was held January 16-20 in Santa Barbara, Calif. (sponsored by the Center for a Post-Modern World and the Center for Process Studies)—we found one paper that in some ways seems to sum up the intentions of the gathering. Basically, the purpose of the conferees was to provide a kind of thinking about both the world and the human self that would give first principles to replace the assumptions of the scientific world-view—commonly referred to as Cartesian mechanism, the process of all that happens, and value-free materialism as the basis of the process. Such a conference, according to David Griffin, could not have been held in a university setting ten years ago. Griffin, who organized the conference, teaches theology at the School of Theology at Claremont.

The paper we want to draw attention to is by Charles Birch, who teaches at the University of Sydney, Australia. He is an advocate, it is said, of "organismic and nonreductionist biology." Evolutionary biologists, he maintains, assign a causal role in evolution to purpose. He says:

Cultural choices determined the direction of genetical evolution. Cultural evolution and genetical evolution go hand in hand. . . . For [animals] too cultural evolution is a reality. How far down the line are we prepared to go with this argument? Logically there is no need to draw a line anywhere in the total evolutionary sequence from atoms to humans. This is a challenge of post-modern thought to evolutionary biology today; to propose a role for purpose together with chance in evolution all down the line. This is to propose that, in addition to external relations as causal, internal relations are causal also in determining the direction of evolution.

A profound question evolution raises is, why did atoms evolve into cells and to plants and to animals? Why didn't creativity stop with the first DNA molecule? Mechanism provides no answer to this question. The ecological model opens up ways to

explore it in terms of lure and response or purposive influence and self-determination. Self-determination is minimal at the atomic level. It is greatest in the higher organisms. Because natural entities are always in process of relating with their own particular degree of freedom to the lure of fulfillment, there is in nature a constant tension between chaos and order.

Implicit in what I have said is that the scientists' methodology and the way in which they interpret the data depends upon their metaphysical stance. Scientists always take sides. I have given one alternative to Cartesian mechanistic biology. There are others. . . .

For some readers, relating purpose to chaos may present some practical difficulties. How do you relate to a meaningless mess? What we actually do, it may be, is to dive into the mess and find out by experiment what kind of order the mess will submit to, perhaps claiming that the order is statistical and cannot be specified by ordinary means; or we may say that the order in the mess is obscure by reason of its enormous complexity. Is that a definition of chaos? We hardly know, since chaos seems by nature undefinable. But we do relate to a world which has in it many things we don't understand. We simply set out to do what seems the right thing to do and learn from the resulting experience.

In another part of his paper Prof. Birch contrasts the mechanistic with the ecological model:

The mechanistic model of life recognizes only one set of causes as operative in living organisms. These are external relations; those components of the environment of the organism that push it or pull it. . . .

The post-modern challenge to biology is to recognize a second set of causes in addition to external relations. This second set is made up of internal relations. We recognize internal relations in ourselves when our lives are profoundly influenced by another person or a compelling purpose. Human lives are changed by such influences. I am what I am partly as a consequence of all the external relations that have impinged on me since conception. But I am also what I am by virtue of the internal relations of friends and of purposes I have chosen. An internal

relation determines the nature of the entity, indeed even its very existence.

In other words, we are, more than anything else, the purposes we have adopted. Birch goes on:

The notion of internal relations as causal strikes at the heart of the strictly mechanistic and reductionist model. The ideal of this model is to divide the world up into next to nothing as possible, call those entities atoms or what you will, and then try to build the world up again from those building blocks. When you do that of course you get a machine. In the mechanistic model the building blocks are substances. They have no internal relations. . . . The human being is a subject and not simply an object pushed around by external relations. . . . So in biology a distinction is to be made between a biology that is constitutionalist (substantialist) and one that is relational (ecological). . . .

I have drawn a contrast between an organism or natural entity and a machine. The parts of a machine are subject only to the laws of mechanics, with its external forces acting on these parts. In some modern machines, such as computers, nuts and bolts are replaced by transistors and microchips. There is no evolution of computers in any real sense. . . . Nuts and bolts can't evolve!

Charles Birch is a persuasive biologist. He does the kind of thinking destined to be the common sense of tomorrow. The wonder is that we have been willing to mistake ourselves for machines for so long! The Center for the Post-Modern World is giving individuals like him a platform to stand on and encouragement to speak out.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves VARIOUS THREATS

THE Fall 1986 issue of *Contemporary Education* presents a statement prepared by the Academy of Humanism and signed by sixteen members, saying that "An unprecedented attack on the public schools is now under way in the United States." The statement goes on:

Conservative religionists and biblical fundamentalists consider secular humanism to be the cause of America's alleged moral decline. They blame secular humanism for the climbing divorce rate, the increase in teenage pregnancy, the rise in alcohol and drug abuse, and many other problems that are a concern to all Americans.

An alarming illustration of this is the most recent enactment of an amendment in 1984 to the Education for Economic Security Act by Senator Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah) prohibiting the expenditure of federal funds for the "teaching of secular humanism" in magnet schools. The Hatch measure did not provide a definition of what constitutes "secular humanism," but left this to the U.S. Department of Education, which in turn delegated the responsibility to local school boards. According to the *Washington Post* (January 19, 1985), Ed Darrell, spokesman for Senator Hatch's Labor and Human Resources Committee, religious conservatives define secular humanism as those things that "get in the way of Christian education." . . . to the conservative religionists, any effort to develop a rational ethical philosophy independent of religious faith, or any attempt to discuss values without reference to the Bible, is considered to be teaching "the religion of secular humanism" and therefore should be prohibited. These critics do not accept freedom of choice.

Replying, the humanists say:

There is a vast difference between indoctrinating students into a specific faith—or none—and teaching them how to appraise evidence and weigh arguments carefully, which is the business of education. If the schoolteachers of America cannot engage in free inquiry and raise fundamental questions in order to develop an appreciation for science, reason, and critical intelligence, then education becomes merely a mechanical process of rote learning. . . .

If American education is to serve the nation's youth as they face the awesome problems of the future, then all Americans must resist every effort by sectarians under any guise to undermine the teaching of science and critical thinking in our schools. We call upon all teachers, administrators, parents, and concerned citizens to join us in resisting this dangerous assault on public education. Those who deny free inquiry, not those who would cultivate it, are the real corrupters of our youth.

So far as we can see, the efforts of fundamentalists to bar the teaching of "evolution" in the public schools has had the consequence of making the teaching of evolution rather mushy in the grade and highschool courses in biology. This does not seem to be a real disaster since the reality of evolution is largely a fact acceptable to common sense, although the derivation of man from some species of anthropoid apes or a common ancestor (as yet undiscovered) may be reasonably questioned on the ground of insufficient evidence as well as by intuitive rejection by a great many people. A reading of a recent book, *The Bone Peddlers*, by William Fix (Macmillan, 1984), would help to make this clear. At least the theories of science are open to change as research proceeds, while revealed religion is supposed to stand forever. And the subject of evolution admittedly contains many scientifically arguable points, which is as it should be. Meanwhile, as the humanists point out, if the conservative religionists gain control, "To be barred from classroom discussion is a long list of 'sensitive' courses and subjects, including moral education, moral dilemmas, values classification, human sexuality, organic evolution, nuclear policy, world government, population control, the roles of males and females in society, etc.," will be the destiny of public school students.

There may be, however, far greater threats to education than the political efforts of the fundamentalists. The general weakening of community life is probably the worst threat of all. Wendell Berry considers this indirectly in the Summer 1986 *Rain*, in an article "More Weapons or More Community?" He says:

Those of us who can remember as far back as World War II do not need statistics to tell us that in the last 40 years the once plentiful small, privately owned neighborhood groceries, pharmacies, restaurants, and other small shops and businesses have become an endangered species, in many places extinct.

When inflation and interest rates are high, young people starting out in small businesses or on small farms must pay a good living every year for the privilege of earning a poor one. People who are working are paying an exorbitant tribute to people who are, as they say, "letting their money work for them." The abstract value of money is preying upon and destroying the particular values that inhere in the lives of the land and of its human communities. For many years now, our officials have been bragging about the immensity of our gross national product and of the growth of our national economy, apparently without recognizing the possibility that the national economy as a whole can grow (up to a point) by depleting or destroying the small local economies within it.

The displacements of millions of people over the last 40 or so years have, of course, been costly. The costs aren't much talked about by apologists for our economy, and they have not been deducted from national or corporate incomes, but the costs exist nevertheless and they are not to be dismissed as intangible; to a considerable extent they have to do with the destruction and degradation of property. The decay of the "inner" parts of our cities is one of the costs; another is soil erosion, and other forms of land loss and land destruction; another is pollution.

Berry now reaches his point:

It may be, also, that people who do not care well for their land will not care enough about it to defend it well. It seems certain that any people who hope to be capable of national defense in the true sense—not only by invading foreign lands, but by driving off invaders of its own land—must love their country with the particularizing passion with which deeply settled people have always loved, not their nation, but their homes, their daily lives and daily bread.

Our great danger at present is that we have no defensive alternative to a sort of hollow patriotic passion and its inevitable expression in nuclear warheads; this is both because our people are too "mobile" to have developed strong local loyalties and strong local economies, and because the nation is thus made everywhere locally vulnerable—undefensible

except as a whole. Our life no longer rests broadly upon our land, but has become an inverted pyramid resting upon the pinpoint of a tiny, dwindling agricultural minority critically dependent upon manufactured supplies and upon credit. . . .

The present version of national defense, like the present version of agriculture, rests upon debt—a debt that is driving up the cost of interest and driving down the worth of money, putting the national government actively in competition against good young people who are striving to own their own small farms and small businesses.

In spite of all our propagandists can do, the foreign threat inevitably seems diminished when our drinking water is unsafe to drink, when our rivers carry tonnages of topsoil that make light of the freight they carry in boats, when our forests are dying from air pollution and acid rain, when we are sick from poisons in the air. Who are the enemies of this country? That is a question dangerous to instituted government when people begin to ask it for themselves.

What sort of education would you suppose would naturally go on in a country where these conditions prevail, where the people are both worried and indifferent?

FRONTIERS

Minority Voices

THE *WRI Newsletter* for last September/October reports that the Afghanistan War is becoming increasingly unpopular among the people of the Soviet Union. The report is by Jan ter Laak, general secretary of Pax Christi, a Netherlands pacifist organization, who visited Pakistan and Afghanistan last summer to gain a better understanding of the course of the war and of Afghan resistance. The report begins:

Five hundred thousand Afghans have perished since the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Three million have taken refuge in Pakistan and a million in Iran, plus half a million refugees in Afghanistan. It is unclear how many Russian soldiers have been killed—estimates run between 10,000 and 15,000. In Kabul, a pro-Soviet government is in power. Plagued by internal division, it would fall immediately if the Soviets withdrew tomorrow. Barbak Karmal, who Soviets claim originally requested their assistance, was forced down in May of this year. . . .

The resistance movement counts a half million *Mujahedeen* (freedom fighters) who boast of controlling 80-90% of the land. The Soviets have only the cities and larger villages, forcing them to rely on airlifts for supplies. A military victory, however, is unlikely for either party. For several years, Pakistan and the Kabul government have been in negotiation in Geneva. Although Pakistan suffers under the heavy burden of 3 million refugees, there is no solution in sight. Soviet policy supports a long-term phase-out of troops, contingent on an immediate end to arms supplies for the *Mujahedeen*. This was repeated at the end of July in Gorbachev's proposal to withdraw 6,000 of the 115,000 troops before the end of the year. A strategy of weakening the *Mujahedeen* combined with the slow withdrawal of Soviet troops would ensure the Kabul government's control. Pakistan demands an immediate withdrawal, which would in effect end Soviet influence in Afghanistan. Seven years' investment would be for nothing; a Russian Vietnam, an end to the Soviet dream of a strengthened strategic position.

No matter how technically limited the Afghan resistance may be—they have no planes, no tanks and no other means of transport—their greatest weapon is Islam. To liberate Afghanistan from godless

communism is a holy obligation: he who loses his life for this cause is a martyr. One can find graves across the entire country, crowned with an Afghanistan flag which give testimony to this.

There is little or no sympathy around the world for the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. While Westerners have been upset by the aggressive methods of Ayatollah's Islamic revolution in Iran, the Western peace movements have condemned the invasion from its beginning.

The value of such reports on current events in the pacifist press is that they are written without political bias, although, like all civilized people, pacifists are basically opposed to intervention and will do what they can within the limits of integrity to put an end to war. Jan ter Laak concludes his report by saying:

There are several smaller things which are just as important for the peace movement. The officials of the International Commission of the Red Cross in Pakistan told me that they are not welcome in the prisons of Kabul where the *Mujahedeen* are held. This means, they believe, that Afghan prisoners are being directly murdered. As both the USSR and Afghanistan have signed the Geneva Convention on handling war criminals, governments, peace organizations, and other social institutions must discuss these violations with their contacts in the USSR. The Resistance leaders claimed that if the Kabul Government allows the Red Cross in, they would follow suit in the areas they control.

For religious and church-related peace movements, such as Pax Christi, it is our task to better understand Islam. The majority of the Sunni Islam in Afghanistan are much more tolerant than the Shi'ite Islam of Iran. But it is Islam which has inspired the fight and which will keep them fighting for years to come.

Other reports from European countries, published in the *WRI Newsletter*, are encouraging. For example, last year, when in Poland General Jaruzelski announced an amnesty for political prisoners, he included among them members of the Freedom and Peace group, some of whom had been jailed "for openly refusing military oaths." Whether such individuals will remain free if they continue to reject such oaths remains to be seen.

Also, last year, some West German Greens met with members of the Polish Freedom and Peace group. While there were differences between them, they also found basic similarities, which they listed:

1. We feel that there is a real need for independent initiatives from the people in the East and West to stand up and work for peace and mutual understanding.

2. The respect and implementation of both the right to self-determination of people and human rights are intrinsic conditions for peace in society and the international community.

3. We oppose any kind of persecution and oppression of people who are striving for peace all over the world.

4. We reject and oppose all ideologies and regimes based on violence or using violence against other nations or people. At the same time, we oppose any kind of violent attacks, kidnapping, etc. Our solidarity is with all who have become victims of violence.

5. The right to conscientious objection is a human right. We therefore demand that all people in prison because they refuse to do military service be released immediately. We also demand the legal provision of an alternative service for all people who refuse the service on the grounds of deep moral, humanitarian, religious, political or similar beliefs. This service should not have a discriminatory or punitive character, should not be part of the military structure should contribute to peace, justice and international understanding and be organized by organizations independent of the state.

A report of interest to those concerned about the war in Lebanon relates that last year a petition signed by 350 Israeli reserve soldiers and officers calls on the Israeli Government "to allow us not to take part in the process of suppression and occupation." This petition, prepared by Y'esh Gvul ("There is a limit"), was published in *Ha'aretz*. It states:

"The War in Lebanon, the settlements and the suppressive actions undertaken in the Occupied Territories indicate a lack of sensitivity for human life, the loss of values, and the loss of the sense of values and the loss of the sense of reality. . . .

"The occupation has corrupted our values and manifestations of extreme nationalism and racism have become acceptable in Israeli society. Jewish terrorist groups receive validation and racist theories have become legitimate."

These soldiers will honor their oath to defend Israel, but will not take part in suppressing the human rights of others. The address of the *WRI Newsletter* is 55 Dawes Street, London SE17 IEL, Great Britain. Subscription is £5 a year.