

BRIEF STUDY OF A MAN

HAVING the feeling that what this country needs is some authentic heroes—in these days of looking around for various "models," shouldn't ideal human models be included?—we had recourse to one of the few real heroes available: Abraham Lincoln. One reason for choosing Lincoln is an extraordinary book, *The Face of Lincoln*, which seems a uniquely suitable source for the purposes we have in view. It was put together by James Mellon and published by Viking in 1979. In it are all the pictures ever taken of Lincoln, exquisitely reproduced, making the book an instant heirloom. Accompanying the photographs, from page to page, are texts by and about Lincoln. The correspondences between words and pictures seem just right—all that you could ask for and more than you expect—a contrapuntal triumph in the graphic arts.

What is it about Lincoln's face, so often said to be "ugly," yet lit by qualities that mute attempts at explanation in words? It is a face that combines penetrating intelligence with the power of command, while compassion unites with determined will to make the visage of a universal man. How can a picture tell us all this? Well, it does. Lincoln's face, captured on glass or film, reveals by direct impact the mystery of an obscure symbolism, displays a reality that we somehow grasp but cannot describe. So the contents of this book, taken together, pictures and text, invite close attention.

Abraham Lincoln's countenance raises a question of human origins, to which neither Darwin nor the Garden of Eden story contributes anything worth repeating. What made or makes an Abraham Lincoln? How are such beings forged? The queries may sound pompous if you have not absorbed something of what is in the book. If you have, they are likely to become insistent.

Biology apart, we start with a central problem he presents—a problem, that is, in a magazine which relies so heavily on words and books. Here, where we regularly celebrate Plato and Dostoevski, it is disconcerting to try to account for the character of a man who admitted casually, "I never read an entire novel in my life," adding that he once commenced Scott's *Ivanhoe*, "but never finished it."

Yet we find that Lincoln knew a number of Shakespeare's plays well and discussed them with the distinguished actor, James Hackett, whom he had seen play Falstaff. "I think," he said to Hackett, "nothing equals Macbeth." And he also said, "I think the soliloquy in Hamlet commencing, 'Oh, my offence is rank' surpasses that commencing 'To be, or not to be'." Of his reading in general, he told his law partner, William Herndon:

I never read textbooks for I have no particular motive to drive and whip me to it. As I am constituted I don't love to read generally, and. . . I feel no interest in what is thus read. I don't, and can't remember such reading. When I have a particular case in hand I have that motive, and feel an interest in the case—feel an interest in ferreting out the questions to the bottom—love to dig up the question by the roots and hold it up and dry it before the fires of the mind. I know that general reading broadens the mind—makes it universal, but it never makes a precise deep clear mind. The study of particular cases does do that thing, as I understand it. General reading has its advantages and disadvantages. Special case reading has its advantages and disadvantages.

Well, this seems a clue to what Lincoln—if we cannot tell much about his "origin"—did with what he was born with. Following this clue, we go to a clergyman who rode on a train (in Connecticut) with him in 1860, after hearing him speak. How, he asked Lincoln, did he learn to

speak so compellingly? "What has your education been?"

Lincoln replied:

"Well, as to education, the newspapers are correct; I never went to school more than six months in my life. But, as you say, this must be a product of culture in some form. I have been putting the question you ask me to myself, while you have been talking. I can say this, that among my earliest recollections I remember how, when a mere child, I used to get irritated when anybody talked to me in a way I could not understand. I don't think I ever got angry at anything else in my life. But that always disturbed my temper, and has ever since. I can remember going to my little bedroom, after hearing the neighbors talk of an evening with my father, and spending no small part of the night walking up and down, and trying to make out what was the exact meaning of some of their, to me, dark sayings. I could not sleep, though I often tried to, when I got on such a hunt after an idea, until I had caught it; and when I thought I had got it, I was not satisfied until I had repeated it over and over, until I had put it in language plain enough, as I thought, for any boy I knew to comprehend. This was a kind of passion with me, and it has stuck by me; for I am never easy now, when I am handling a thought, till I have bounded it North, and bounded it South, and bounded it East, and bounded it West. Perhaps that accounts for the characteristic you observe in my speeches, though I never put the two things together before.

The clergyman thought Lincoln's speeches were works of genius, and said so; then asked him how he came by his discipline—was it in preparing for the practice of law? Lincoln said:

"Oh, yes! I 'read law,' as the phrase is; that is, I became a lawyer's clerk in Springfield, and copied tedious documents, and picked up what I could of law in the intervals of other work. But your question reminds me of a bit of education I had, which I am bound in honesty to mention. In the course of my law-reading, I constantly came upon the word *demonstrate*. I thought at first that I understood its meaning, but soon became satisfied that I did not. I said to myself, 'What do I mean when I *demonstrate* more than when I *reason* or *prove*? How does *demonstration* differ from any other proof? I consulted Webster's Dictionary. That told me of 'certain proof,' 'proof beyond the possibility of doubt'; but I could form no idea what sort of proof that was.

I thought a great many things were proved beyond a possibility of doubt, without recourse to any such extraordinary process of reasoning as I understood 'demonstration' to be. I consulted all the dictionaries and books of reference I could find, but with no better results. You might as well have defined *blue* to a blind man. At last I said, 'Lincoln you can never make a lawyer if you do not understand what *demonstrate* means'; and I left my situation in Springfield went home to my father's house, and stayed there till I could give any proposition in the six books of Euclid at sight. I then found out what 'demonstrate' means, and went back to my law-studies."

Another quality of the man needs to be added to this account of how Lincoln worked to get to the bottom of things that bothered him. He felt a calling to serve his country. While one can hardly hope to explain this sense of obligation, it is possible to name some of the traits he brought to the task. Again we turn to Herndon, who wrote in a letter in 1886:

Mr. Lincoln was a cool, cautious, conservative, and longheaded man. Mr. Lincoln could be trusted by the people. He was a pure man, a great man, and a patriot. In the practice of law he was simple, honest, fair and broad-minded. He was courteous at the bar, and to the court. He was open, candid and square in his profession, never practicing on the sharp or low. Mr. Lincoln met all questions fairly, squarely, . . . making no concealments of his . . . intentions in any case. He took no snap judgments, nor used any tricks in his business. . . .

As for how Lincoln's mind worked, Herndon said elsewhere:

. . . Mr. Lincoln's perceptions were slow, cold, precise and exact. Everything came to Lincoln . . . clean and clear cut, strips of all extraneous matter whatsoever. Everything came to him in its precise shape—gravity and color. . . . No lurking illusion—delusion—error, false in itself and clad for the moment in robes of splendor, woven by the imagination, ever passed unchallenged or undetected over the threshold of his mind, that divides vision from the realm and home of thought. Names to him were nothing and titles naught—assumptions always standing back abashed at his cold intellectual glare. . . . There was no refraction . . . there, in this man's brain: he was not impulsive, fanciful or imaginative, but cold, calm, precise and exact: he threw his whole

mental light around the object seen. . . . In his mental view he crushed the unreal, . . . the hollow and the sham: . . . he saw what no man could well dispute, but he failed to see what might be seen by other men. . . . His own mind was his own and exclusive standard. . . .

Recalling Lincoln's own account of how he pursued what he wanted to know to the depth of the resources available, and with Herndon's description of his integrity and his intellectual discipline, we begin to recognize the ingredients of a man of Lincoln's stature. For parallels to fill out the picture, there is Ortega's way of characterizing those who have corrected, renewed, and then recreated science. As a student, a man of this sort, Ortega says, is disdainful of everything he has not found out for himself. He is one who "feels the profound necessity of truth," and who "will approach this bit of ready-made knowledge with caution, full of suspicion and prejudice, submitting it to criticism, even assuming in advance that what the book says is not true." He will unmake what is presented to him as settled, in order to remake it for himself. This was Lincoln's way.

Then, what we have learned of Lincoln recalls John Schaar's observations about the character of heroic individuals—he names Lincoln, Gandhi, and some others—saying that while the rest of us *have* views, such men *live* theirs: "More of their lives are contained in, or centered on, their views. In that fascinating way, great actors have a mode or experience of selfhood and identity that is different from ours." And for contrast, there is the late Gregory Bateson's melancholy comment on the graduate students he taught. In his experience, they were so lacking in conviction that they couldn't feel any *tension* in issues of fact versus theory "What they may find out," he said, "doesn't really impact on theory because they don't have any theory they're willing to hold tight enough to get an impact. It *slides* all the time."

Lincoln, however, apparently had no "theories" that were not entirely his own, part of his original endowment or constructed by himself.

What did other of his contemporaries think about him? Nathaniel Hawthorne interviewed him in 1862. He said in a report that the *Atlantic Monthly* refused to publish:

The whole physiognomy is as coarse a one as you would meet in the length and breadth of the States; but, withal, it is redeemed, illuminated, softened, and brightened by a kindly though serious look out of his eyes, and an expression of homely sagacity, that seems weighted with rich results of village experience.

A great deal of native sense; no bookish cultivation, no refinement; honest at heart, and thoroughly so, and yet, in some sort, sly—at least, endowed with a tact and wisdom that are akin to craft, and would impel him, I think to take an antagonist in flank, rather than a bull run at him right in front. But, on the whole, I like this sallow, queer, sagacious visage, with the homely sympathies that warmed it; and, for my small share in the matter, would as fief have Uncle Abe for a ruler as any man whom it would have been practicable to put in his place.

Lincoln, Hawthorne declared, although a Westerner (from Illinois), and born in Kentucky, was "the essential representative of all Yankees, and the veritable specimen, physically, of what the world seems determined to regard as our characteristic qualities." And a correspondent for the *London Times* wrote during the Civil War years:

One would say that, although the mouth was made to enjoy a joke, it could also utter the severest sentence which the head could dictate, but that Mr. Lincoln would be ever more willing to temper justice with mercy, and to enjoy what he considers the amenities of life, than to take a harsh view of men's nature and of the world, and to estimate things in an ascetic or puritan spirit. A person who met Mr. Lincoln in the street would not take him to be what—according to the usages of European society—is called a "gentleman"; . . . but, at the same time, it would not be possible for the most indifferent observer to pass him in the street without notice.

John Hay, one of Lincoln's secretaries in the White House, spoke of his personal habits and illustrated his humor:

He was very abstemious, ate less than anyone I know. Drank nothing but water, not from principle, but because he did not like wine or spirits. Once in rather dark days early in the war, a Temperance Committee came to him and said the reason we did not win was because our army drank so much whisky as to bring down the curse of the Lord upon them. He said dryly that it was rather unfair on the part of the aforesaid curse, as the other side drank more and worse whisky than ours did.

As to his way of conducting business, Hay said: "He was extremely unmethodical: it was a four years' struggle on Nicolay's [the other secretary's] part and mine to get him to adopt some systematic rules. He would break through every regulation as fast as it was made." Lincoln succinctly declared his Jeffersonian convictions in a letter of 1859:

. . . Soberly, it is now no child's play to save the principles of Jefferson from total overthrow in this nation.

One would start with great confidence that he could convince any sane child that the simpler propositions of Euclid are true; but, nevertheless, he would fail, utterly, with one who should deny the definitions and axioms. The principles of Jefferson are the definitions and axioms of free society. And yet they are denied, and evaded, with no small show of success. One dashingly calls them "glittering generalities"; another bluntly calls them "self evident lies", and still others insidiously argue that they apply only to "superior races."

These expressions, differing in form, are identical in object and effect—the supplanting the principles of free government, and restoring those of classification, caste, and legitimacy. They would delight a convocation of crowned heads, plotting against the people. They are the van-guard—the miners and sappers of returning despotism. We must repulse them, or they will subjugate us.

This is a world of compensations; and he who would *be* no slave, must consent to *have* no slave. Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves; and, under a just God, can not long retain it.

All honor to Jefferson—to the man who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence by a single people, had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely

revolutionary document, an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times, and so to embalm it there that today, and in all coming days, it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling-block to the very harbingers of re-appearing tyranny and oppression.

We began by noticing that Lincoln read few books. Quite possibly he had no encounters with Plato and Socrates. Yet there seems a sense in which he didn't need to. He found Socratic wisdom in himself. The Athenian philosopher had maintained that whatever a man thinks or does, he must be finally accountable to only one authority—himself or his conscience. This appears in the *Gorgias* and the *Theaetetus* and doubtless elsewhere. It also appears in Lincoln, in what he said to a visiting delegation in 1863 (quoted by Ida Tarbell in her *Life of Abraham Lincoln*): "I desire to so conduct the affairs of this Administration that if, at the end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, I have lost every other friend on earth, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside of me."

Our brief study of Abraham Lincoln was undertaken in the hope of justifying the choice of this man as a hero to admire and a human to emulate. He happened to be a politician, which places obvious limitation on the example. A politician is bound to a confining path of action. Whatever he does, he has to take enough people with him to make what he attempts effective, and this, for most politicians, often means vulgarizing the goal. So, we study Lincoln, not as a politician, but as a man who chose to be a politician for—so to speak—the duration. And we study him to see how the man we have outlined from contemporary reports—and from what he said of himself—how he adapted himself, without compromise, to the constraints of politics. Compromise is often said to be of the essence of politics, but Lincoln on occasion explained the straight line of his intent. He said in a letter to Horace Greeley in 1862, answering the journalist's criticism:

As to the policy I "seem to be pursuing" as you say, I have not meant to leave anyone in doubt.

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be "the Union as it was." If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time *save* slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time *destroy* slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery. . . . I have here stated my purpose according to my view of *official* duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed wish that all men every where could be free.

Here was a man of principle operating in a field of political forces. He sought an achievable good, in full awareness that politics is the "art of the possible," at the same time putting clearly on record his convictions as a man.

More than a century has passed since Lincoln's time. Some thoughtful Americans are now convinced that the big and powerful nation-state is more of a threat than a benefit to the modern world. There are scholars who propose that the Articles of Confederation might have been a better instrument for uniting the states. Others argue (with considerable substance) that the time has come to divide the country into semi-autonomous economic and ecological regions. This, they say, would bring effective and responsible self-government at least within reach.

Lincoln's career as a politician was great enough in its way, but what he stands for as a human being seems far more important, and it is in this sense that we have proposed him as a hero, asking the question: What would such a man be likely to think and decide today, and how would he expend his energies for the common good?

REVIEW

"NATION" ARTICLES ON ENERGY

WE have for review *America's Energy* (Pantheon, 1980, \$7.95, soft cover), a book of 443 pages made up of articles which appeared in the *Nation* during the past century. (The *Nation* began its career as a liberal weekly in 1865.) The editor of this book on energy is Robert Engler, author of *The Brotherhood of Oil*, and hardly anyone could be better qualified to edit a collection of articles on the changing sources of fuel and power in the United States. Adequate review of this book calls for experts such as Amory Lovins or Vince Taylor—perhaps these two will be persuaded to give it critical attention—but meanwhile some reflections about the uses and value of such a volume may be in order.

From the days of the *Nation's* first editor, E. L. Godkin, to the quarter of a century (ending in 1978) with Carey McWilliams at the helm, and thereafter under the present editor, Victor Navasky, this magazine has been searching, responsible, and uncompromising in its comment on public affairs. It has served the intelligent sector of the population in exactly the way Walter Lippmann defined the press at its best—"like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about bringing one episode after another out of darkness into vision." Mr. Engler's volume does this in retrospect on the various aspects of energy production. The coverage is impressive, the detail adequate and carefully reported, with vital issues exposed. Its readers will acquire basic education in economic history. Yet Mr. Lippmann's further comments on the searchlight role of the press deserve attention:

Men cannot do the work of the world by this light alone. They cannot govern society by episodes, incidents, and eruptions. It is only when they work by a steady light of their own, that the press, when it is turned upon them, reveals a situation intelligible enough for a popular decision. The trouble lies deeper than the press, and so does the remedy.

This seems a good way to define the responsibility of the reader. He needs a steady light of his own in order to make sense of what the press reveals.

Some years ago MANAS quoted from Douglass Cater a brief comment on the situation of a great many readers. What he said keeps returning to mind:

Our journalists, both on TV and in print, pledge fealty to the proposition that society thrives by communication of great gobs of unvarnished truth. Our law courts make us swear to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Yet we only dimly understand how, in an all-enveloping environment, man chisels his little statues of perceived reality.

Through the years, the *Nation* has done its part, as Mr. Engler's selections show. Its searchlight has been well directed, and it remains for the reader to chisel his "statues of perceived reality." Something of what the *Nation's* beams disclose in this volume is indicated in the editor's introduction, which begins:

Energy policy is now recognized as central to the performance of the domestic and global political economy. Choices about energy are intertwined with employment patterns, inflation, community survival, and war and peace. American national interest, once on the frontier of western Pennsylvania, now embraces almost every region of the earth including the seabed.

When World War I ended, the victors hastened to dismember the defeated empires and claim the oil fields of the Middle East. It was freely predicted that "the next world war" would be over oil—the fuel displacing coal as the determinant of national power. World War II was not fought over oil. But the international arrangements made in its wake helped to integrate the great reserves of the Middle East into a corporate world order controlled from the West. The Mediterranean became an American sea, and the energy supply lines for "the American century" seemed firmly in place. In the wings was nuclear power to assure military supremacy and keep the American system "number one" should fossil fuel demand ultimately outrun supply.

The United States was soon using one third of the world's daily energy output. The consumption of more and more was celebrated as the key to individual growth and national greatness. But the assumption that this was a natural order of things received some setbacks. As the Western hold over producing areas tightened, rising nationalist movements challenged their countries' assigned role as reservoirs on tap for the "advanced" industrial world. American faith that progress was automatic and that no balance sheet for the hazards of securing and utilizing energy need be kept was undermined as the costs of an energy-intensive economy were shifted back home and an increasing percentage of

the American population became aware of their vulnerability.

As belief fades in the magic of technology and the potential of atomic power, the magic of the political and corporate order in defining the public interest and protesting personal well-being is now sharply questioned. Is the nation approaching the point when the unstated social contract, under which the people concede their political power over fundamental decisions in return for assurance of economic opportunity, will be abrogated?

While the United States remains blessed with more abundant energy resources than most nations, increasingly it draws its petroleum from overseas. And now American leadership claims vital national interests in the Persian Gulf. . . . Arms, food, and aid are marshalled to protect our access to oil and support the dwindling number of rulers who, despite the growing hostility of their own people, have not as yet repudiated such hegemony. Did the prophecies err—by one war?

Mr. Engler points out that while, years ago, the argument about energy sources was mostly concerned with questions of ownership and control, today public debate focuses mainly on technical questions: Can we, or can't we, find sources of energy other than nuclear and fossil fuels? Everyone agrees that "conservation" is desirable and necessary, but the modes of saving fuel popularly advocated seem smokescreen cliches compared to measures that might be really effective. As Engler says:

Exhorting the householder to turn off the pilot light on the stove or live more simply, however beneficial, offers an easier political course than restructuring the ways the industrial society, including the energy industry itself, allocates capital, employs energy in the production of goods, and generates new wants. Meanwhile, the forces which dominate the going energy structure do everything to encourage the view that such matters are better left to the marketplace and to the presumably apolitical corporate managers. The latter, we are increasingly reminded, share with the best of us a love for science, chamber music, British drama and incidentally, freedom from accountability for policies that determine the future of the society.

In short, this is a book likely to disabuse American readers of the idea that the people in charge care in any serious way about the practical needs of the people or about policies based on foresight in behalf of their socioeconomic future. Immediate self-interest is far more important to the managers, not because they are evil men, but

because their lifelong training has been in devotion to profits, the only approved goal of their economic religion.

What is in this book? The sections, made up of articles, deal in sequence with coal, hydroelectric and electric power, oil, nuclear energy, possible alternative sources, and the numerous facets of national policy affecting and affected by decisions about energy. Many of the contributors, through the years, have been and are eminent. Among the writers on coal are James M. Cain (oddly enough), Fiorello La Guardia, Harry Caudill, and Wendell Berry. William Hard and Robert Sherrill write on oil. I. F. Stone writes about corporate control and Arab oil, and Leo Szilard, J. D. Bernal, and Norbert Wiener discuss nuclear power. Other contributors (in an Afterword) include Herbert Hoover, E. F. Schumacher, and J. Bronowski.

Schumacher's diagnosis is fundamental, applying in all directions:

The implications of a technology moving ever more rapidly in the direction of giantism, complexity and violence are becoming so clear that no great gifts of prophecy are needed to understand where they are taking us. In human terms, giantism leads to frustration all around; it entails a degree of specialization that destroys work satisfaction and produces fragmentary men, too specialized to be wise. In social terms, it means exclusion: an ever-increasing proportion of mankind finds itself excluded from the productive process, except in the role of technological gap-fillers, whether on the factory floor or in some vast "open-style" office. The frustration and exclusion disrupt all traditional life and engender widespread irresponsibility. . . . In ecological terms, it means damage: the tolerance margins of nature are, it seems, very well adjusted to the "human scale," but—as we can observe only too frequently—they cannot cope with giantism and the violence of super-technology. In resources terms, It means exhaustion.

Here, without a doubt, are the definable reasons for our present difficulties. And also an explanation, perhaps, of why this book will not be easy to understand—which is no fault of either its writers or the editor!

COMMENTARY

DO NO HARM

IN his new book, *Teach Your Own*, John Holt makes the career in law of Abraham Lincoln part of his argument against the monopoly of "knowledge" claimed by educational institutions. Holt points out that while much of the most important work in developing applications of solar energy is now being done by backyard inventors and degreeless amateurs, the universities are starting to award degrees in solar energy. Eventually, he suggests, the institutions will try to get laws passed to prevent people without degrees from doing important work in that area.

They will, in short, try to turn one more field of human invention and action into a "profession," a legal monopoly, which only those can do who have had a lot of expensive schooling.

This has already happened in the law, as in many other fields: Abraham Lincoln, and many others, did not learn law by going to law school, but by reading law books. Until recently people used to speak, not of "studying" law, but of "reading law." It was always possible for poor boys (more rarely girls) to become lawyers by reading the law, and then working in law offices, doing lowly jobs at first, but learning more and being given more responsibility as they learned, and perhaps in the long run setting up their own law offices. No doubt even then the sons of the rich had a big advantage. But the poor at least had a way in. Not any more.

Holt is suggesting here that we have a system which makes it even more difficult than it was in the last century for a man like Abe Lincoln to win his way to positions of major responsibility. The rules are all in favor of affluent mediocrity. Perhaps a real Lincoln would manage to get to the top, no matter what the obstacles, but other humans of great potentiality might be stopped or discouraged by the institutional barriers.

In another place Holt writes against teaching animals to imitate humans and do tricks:

The most important question any thinking creature can ask itself is, "What is worth thinking about?" When we deny its right to decide that for

itself, when we try to control what it must attend to and think about, we make it less observant, resourceful, and adaptive, in a word, less intelligent, in a blunter word, more stupid.

This may be the place to answer a question that by now many people have asked me: what do I think of baby training books—teach your baby this, teach your baby that, make your baby a genius. I am against them. The tricks they tell parents to teach their babies to do are not necessary, not very helpful, and if continued very long, probably very harmful. The trouble with teaching babies tricks, even the tricks of reading, is that the more we do this, the more they think that learning means and can only mean *being taught by others to do tricks*, and the less they want to or can explore and make sense of the world around them in their own ways and for their own reasons.

Surely learning to read is more than a trick! Of course it is. But a child can be given the impression that it is a good trick—a good show-off trick—and never quite realize its true place in human life. The way Lincoln used his reading ability shows that he regarded some reading as a trick not worth doing, while other reading, as a tool, he found invaluable. Lincoln was perhaps the greatest of our autodidacts, along with being one of our greatest men. The two seem to go together. But you can't set out to produce autodidacts, since an autodidact is a person who produces himself. If we want more autodidacts—with some of Lincoln's caliber—Holt would probably say, "At least don't do them harm when they are young," and *that* will take much study and effort on our part. Not doing harm is not as easy as it sounds.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY ACTION

COMPILING and distributing useful information is one of the more legitimate functions of government and we are glad to find the State of California (where we live) doing well in this department. A recent state publication, *Working Together: Community Self-Reliance in California*, prepared and issued by the Office of Appropriate Technology—distributed free to all Californians (who ask for it) and available at \$6.50 to out-of-staters—seems a valuable contribution to readers wondering what people in towns and cities can do to help themselves, and how they are doing it, with the information coming from the active citizens involved. In this book the accomplishments of some twenty groups are described. For example, the report on the San Diego Center for Appropriate Technology begins:

In 1978, a small group of dedicated people in San Diego created the Center . . . because they were concerned about dependence on fossil fuels and the misuse of natural resources. The Center is the only organized demonstration of appropriate technologies in Southern California.

The purpose of the Center is to demonstrate how appropriate technologies can help stimulate the development of neighborhood and community-scale systems capable of meeting future water, energy, agricultural, and industrial needs of urban areas. Demonstration projects at the Center include a greenhouse aqua culture unit, a wind-powered areator, a rainwater collection and filtration system, solar distillers, solar water heaters, a pedal-powered energy system, a methane digester, a solar oven, a roof garden, and a hundred-square-foot solar furnace.

The San Diego people in this group began planning and working together in 1975 and now report the various steps of development. At present—

The Center receives funds from recycling aluminum and newspapers, from general public contributions, from selling memberships, from fees for solar water-heating and solar oven-building

classes, from donations for tours and slide presentations, and from bake sales. A campus student support group is planning a benefit concert, and the Cooperative Campus Ministries contribute some money for a bimonthly newsletter. We contribute to our personal support by eating food we produce in the greenhouse. . . .

Our goal is still to establish a college, and ideally many of them, for regional self-sufficiency.

Counseling like-minded people who may want to try similar things, they say:

Don't expect a lot of support from government. If your ideas are good, many officials are sympathetic but they won't stick their necks out. Elected officials usually won't respond to an idea unless it will benefit a large identifiable constituency and won't turn off other constituencies.

Don't expect a lot of support from private individuals. People may like your ideas but only a few will give you concrete support in the form of money or space. Even when people give something, they usually want a return—so make certain you are able and willing to pay their price.

Live frugally. This will give you more time and money with which to accomplish your goals. . . . Don't be afraid of hard times. They will temper you and make you stronger. Hard times really test an organization's commitment. We have found that you can accomplish ten times more with three dedicated people than you could with thirty lukewarm people.

The Community Environmental Council of Santa Barbara—identified as one of "the oldest environmental groups in California"—is well described. The latest undertaking of the C.E.C., now under way, is the Mesa Project where, on a half-acre demonstration garden, biointensive methods will be taught.

CEC expects the Mesa Project to be a national demonstration for appropriate technologies in urban areas. It will test and demonstrate these technologies not only in the classes and in the garden, but also in the design of the building itself. The design incorporates earth berms on three sides, even growing strawberries on the roof to integrate the building into its immediate environment. Insulated walls used for thermal mass, a variety of solar heating systems, and the first Clivus Multrum composting toilet approved in the county all ensure that the Mesa Project will

show what technologies are appropriate to an urban setting.

All of CEC's programs have been strengthened by staff's willingness to work with the existing institutions and the City. CEC helps to formulate county policies relating to resource recovery and energy planning. Its management has remained fairly consistent; there is not a large turnover of Board members, and the co-directors have been active since CEC's inception [at the time of the Santa Barbara oilspill in 1969] which has given continuity to their programs. CEC has shared its knowledge with the community through public forums, garden demonstrations, and other activities. Long-term, sustainable projects are the mark of this organization that has done more than its share of improving the environment of Santa Barbara.

OCO stands for Oakland Community Organization. It has no government funds and its staff members work as catalysts and educators, so that the various community groups which it assists and coordinates, and in a loose way represents, develop capacities of their own for local action. This group had its beginnings in 1972.

The people organizing the effort moved deliberately to clarify the common concerns and to organize the people. Neighborhood groups got stop signs put up, pot holes fixed, and deserted lots cleaned. The organizers worked with independent groups in West and East Oakland neighborhoods as needed. As it became apparent that group action caused a positive reaction, the idea of organizing groups to work together for a common purpose took hold. [The various groups] called a community convention in 1977, and 1,000 delegates representing more than 180 neighborhood groups attended. The convention ratified a constitution that outlined OCO's organizational structure as a non-profit corporation. . . .

The racial makeup of the organizations involved in OCO is approximately 65 per cent Black, 25 per cent White, and 10 per cent Hispanic. Income level ranges from lower middle to very low. The people involved are those who are committed to their neighborhoods. . . .

What OCO staff do for their clients would probably make a good definition of what a civil servant should be. They act as facilitators in bringing change to the neighborhoods of Oakland. Rather than set policies, they take their direction from the

neighborhood groups and help the groups solve their problems. . . . OCO staff do not speak out at meetings, advocate positions for the neighborhood groups, or make presentations before public bodies. Rather, they encourage members to speak directly. OCO staff help groups identify issues, plan and develop tactics for their resolution, and coordinate activities among themselves.

What do the groups accomplish with this help?

OCO has scored some major victories in housing, education, employment, and economic development to ensure the stability of Oakland's neighborhoods. Housing has been and continues to be a particular concern. OCO initiated an urban homestead program that has brought the inventory of vacant HUD housing units to zero. . . .

Another major concern of OCO member groups is truancy in schools. With advice from both citizens and educators, it developed a program that fills the special needs of students who become habitual truants.

They also help students to obtain summer jobs, and the staff is now teaching the various community groups "to do their own planning, research, writing, and other activities instead of asking OCO staff for help."

These few examples by no means reveal the diversity of community organization and effort in California. One story tells about a Chinese community housing corporation, another describes a health project undertaken by an Indian tribe. A coastal community saved its residents from a polluting use of waste water by developing an alternative disposal plan. All these self-reliant activities in California communities make an encouraging sign.

FRONTIERS

Pennsylvania, New England, California

A PLEASANT success story is told in *Country Journal* for March—the account of a couple, Paul and Betty Keene, who in 1945 bought a farm of 300 acres in Central Pennsylvania for less than a new car costs today, and developed it into an organic food mail-order business that now has 40,000 customers. They also have a store on the farm where the products they raise—grains, vegetables, bakery and canned goods—are sold. The farm is called Walnut Acres and about 250 retail stores—as far away as Pittsburgh and New York—are distributors. The Keenes have seventy-five employees, all of whom own a share in the business. It should be said that their canned soup costs about three times the price of Campbell's, but people seem to think the soup is worth it.

The early days were spent getting the soil in shape. The land is hilly and was once characterized by the Soil Conservation Service as "not suited for agriculture." Now it produces "forty bushels of soybeans and a hundred of corn to the acre, comparable to the average for Iowa."

The writer of this article in *Country Journal* is Nathaniel Tripp, who raises draft horses. He tells how the Keenes prepare the land for crops:

Because Walnut Acres relies almost entirely upon green manures, fully a third of the 360 acres of tillage are out of production each year. No farmer could afford to carry that loss of production without a special market. . . . After two years of being planted in green manure, usually a legume such as clover or alfalfa, the rejuvenated field is then plowed under using a conventional moldboard plow. The crop decomposes, releasing stored nutrients and adding organic matter to the soil. That also encourages the growth of microorganisms and earthworms, which in turn add more nutrients and structure to the soil. The field then goes through a four-year rotation. A typical rotation is vegetables the first year, a small grain such as oats the second year, soybeans, which are also a legume in the third, and then corn in the last year. Starting again with two years in green manure, the field then goes through the same

sequence. Rotation is practiced because different crops demand different nutrients from the soil, and the soil is not depleted as quickly. Rotating crops also discourages harmful insects and diseases from becoming established. A healthy soil performs that same function on its own.

"We had a lot of trouble with insects when we first moved here," said Paul. "There were some crops, such as squash, that we simply couldn't grow. Now that's completely changed. To us, that is a wonderful indication that the soil has become healthy."

The theory is that insects and diseases are always present anyway, and are nature's way of preserving herself. They multiply sufficiently to destroy a crop only when that crop is ready to be destroyed. "We all have tuberculosis germs inside us," Paul went on, "and yet we don't get sick unless a weakness invites those germs to multiply."

How did their business get so big? They hardly expected it.

In fact, it must have come as a sort of revelation to the Keenes that such a market existed at all. During their first few years on the farm they began making apple butter, mainly shipping it as a gift to friends. Somehow, Clementine Paddleford, the food editor of the New York *Herald-Tribune*, got her hands on a jar of the Keenes' "Apple Essence," containing not only organic apples, but also "delectable wood smoke odors, the colors of gorgeous fall days, and infinity from the depths of the blue blue skies." She raved about it, and about the wonderful things reportedly going on down at Walnut Acres in her column. Lo and behold, automobiles with New York license plates began to show up in the Keenes' barnyard.

The market is limited because of the extra costs in conscientious food processing:

Many expensive machines are used only a few days out of the year because of the variety of the crops, but having the equipment means the crop can be processed the same day it is picked, and processed with the least loss of nutrients. Many jobs are done by hand, such as peeling tomatoes. Commercial plants use solutions of lye and hydrochloric acid, and can still boast that the produce is "organically raised."

There are equally large and larger organic food businesses around the country. Some day,

when more people make their living this way, they won't grow so big.

Another pleasant example of what seems like a success story is a catalog from the Good Things Collective—the Cotton Place, 52 Main Street, Northhampton, Mass. 01060. These people, who are a workers' cooperative, sell 100 per cent cotton clothing by mail. The fabric is preshrunk and needs no ironing. Now and then we get things like this in the mail, so tastefully designed, so devoid of commercial flavor, that when we can we buy something we need. The prices seem no more than they have to be. The drawings of the garments (for women and men) are especially attractive. Items include cotton pants—long and short—jumpsuits, and various shirts and dresses. Also caps and hammocks. People interested in the workers' cooperative idea can have a copy of the Good Things "Agreement to Operate a Self-Managed Business" by asking for it.

This seems the place to tell about one other catalog that is practically a coffee table item—a showing of the garden tools distributed by Smith & Hawken, 68 Homer, Palo Alto, Calif. 94301. The drawings of the tools, like the goods shown by Good Things, are done in pointillist style. They offer digging and cutting tools and watering cans. Most of the tools come from Bulldog Tools Ltd. of Clarrington Forge near Leeds in England, which began making them in 1799.

All of the tools here can be considered investments, for all with proper care should last a lifetime. I think we all share the experience of buying a tool at a hardware store or nursery and having it break soon thereafter. With the advent of "consumer tools" and the production methods employed to produce them, many of the tools used in and around the farm and garden have become mere shadows of their former selves. We want to see this changed. Good tools will always be the least expensive in the end, both for the users and for the environment. . . . The only way fine quality hand tools will have a renaissance is for people to use them. . . .