

LOOKING FORWARD—AND BACK

AS we move toward the dawn of the twenty-first century—but fourteen years away—we look to the future with uncertainty and trepidation. What issues will confront us, in contrast with those of the past? Will there be, as today, national enemies and friends? Or are the ecological prophets right in predicting that the importance of territorial rights and the privileges of trade will soon diminish before the everywhere evident need to repair the damage that all nations, with hardly any exception, have done to the planet? There are dozens, scores of books filled with dire anticipations, presenting evidence difficult to contradict.

It is far easier to look back than forward a hundred years. Yet obtaining instruction from history is easier said than done. What, we might ask, have we failed to learn from the past hundred years? What passions which were so genuinely aroused during those years are now dead and forgotten? Is there any theme, besides getting and spending—which has been a continuous expression of human purpose? Are we entirely made by the events of the hour or are there goals which seem independent of historical vicissitudes?

We have been reading in a recent book which covers a portion of the century in question—*Eugene V. Debs—Citizen and Socialist*, by Nick Salvatore, issued in 1982 by the University of Illinois Press. This work is both biography and social history, with more than four hundred pages. What can one learn from such a book? One finds it hard to say. Yet after reading it, one thing remains clear—the impact of a most unusual human being. The story of Debs's life makes you wonder what such a man would choose to do if he were among us today and only now reaching maturity. This is a question always good to ask. What would Tom Paine do, if he were now here? Or Giordano Bruno? There were other martyrs to

whom we owe much of our freedom and many of our ideals, and how would they occupy themselves in our society? What kind of verse would Shelley now be writing? What kind of novels composed by Herman Melville?

Gene Debs was born in 1855 in Terre Haute, Indiana, a "stragglng village" that became during his lifetime an industrial city. His parents had come from France to America six years before. At fourteen he left high school to work for the railroad, scraping paint on locomotives for fifty cents a day. Before long he became a fireman.

Then, being out of a job, he became an accounting clerk in a wholesale grocery. He kept up his association with the firemen and was a charter member of the local lodge of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen. While working for the grocery he became secretary of the firemen's lodge and an active organizer in the evening. He wrote for the firemen's magazine and was a public speaker for the Democratic Party. In 1879, now becoming well known, he ran for city clerk on the democratic ticket and was easily elected. He continued to work with the railroad firemen, eventually writing editorials for the *Locomotive Firemen's Magazine*. He came gradually to recognize the importance of the solidarity of labor and the innate character of corporate capitalism. Initially he had little faith in strikes, but the experiences of the 1870s and 1880s changed his view. Salvatore summarizes:

"The strike," he preached in a moving editorial in June 1888, "is the weapon of the oppressed, of men capable of appreciating justice and having the courage to resist wrong and contend for principle. The Nation had for its cornerstone a strike." Raising the revolutionary banner of the citizen-producer, Debs argued that the new corporate power threatened the values of all in nineteenth-century America. When a newspaper at the behest of the corporation urged a worker to accept the company's offer rather than

suffer deprivation for principle, more than that individual's manhood was at stake. All of society would suffer, as the corporations "trample upon the divine declaration 'that all men are created equal,' as pagans trample upon the cross." Attacking that narrow definition of manhood, Debs insisted that if "the dollar is to be everything," forcing society to bow to its power, then by definition "the corporation," as it has the greatest resources, "is to rule, and workingmen, with their faces in the dust, are to serve. The corporation idea" expects employees to "worship with pagan submissiveness the golden image they set up" and eventually hopes to restructure all of society in that image. In this battle the workingman obviously fought for much more than just his immediate interests.

The great Pullman strike in 1894 was a turning point in Debs's life. George Pullman, the manufacturer of railroad sleeping cars, had situated his plant at the center of a model town which provided housing for his work force, and other amenities, deducting for them from the wages paid. The workers struck because of a severe wage cut which left them unable to pay their rent. One man who worked for Pullman for twelve years said that his daily pay dropped from \$2.26 to \$1.03 in 1893, and then to 91 cents. While Debs, who had become a leader for the strikers, warned them not to interrupt the mails, the Pullman attorney charged that the strike interfered with the mails and obtained an injunction against the American Railway Union and Debs, and Grover Cleveland sent federal troops to enforce this legal decision. Debs was tried for "contempt" in November and sentenced to six months in jail, at Woodstock, Illinois. He had his fortieth birthday there. Salvatore writes:

. . . [Debs] claimed that at Woodstock he discovered the reality of capitalism and accepted the mission of his life to preach Socialism. Prior to Pullman, Debs wrote in 1921, "I had heard but little of Socialism. . . (and) had yet to learn the working of the capitalist system." But the strike changed that. "I was to be baptized in Socialism in the roar of conflict . . . in the gleam of every bayonet and the flash of every rifle *the class struggle was revealed*. This was my first practical lesson in Socialism." In jail, Debs continued, he pored over Edward Bellamy (whom he had earlier dismissed as a "Boston savant"), Lawrence

Gronlund, W. H. "Coin" Harvey, Ignatius Donnelly, and especially Karl Kautsky, the German popularizer of Karl Marx. . . .

As Debs noted in a prison interview in the summer of 1895, he still believed in "education, industry, frugality, veracity, fidelity, diligence, sobriety and charity"—the whole panoply of traditional Protestant virtues—essential to success, and he pointed to Lincoln as the classic American example. But present conditions presented serious new obstacles. Industrial capitalism, directed by giant national and multinational corporations, had so changed the structure of society that even adherence to these virtues resulted for many in poverty and degradation. To oppose this powerful counterrevolutionary impulse from business, Debs sought not to dismiss but to revive the power of those values. . . .

The importance of Debs's resistance to adopting the Socialist label at this time is not merely of semantic interest. Ultimately, of course, he would embrace the term, but he would bring to it a meaning specific to his earlier career and profoundly rooted in his understanding of the American democratic tradition. The Pullman and Woodstock experiences do indicate a growing radicalization, but Debs took his inspiration from Jefferson and Lincoln and not from orthodox Socialist writers. Never had Debs's ideological vision found such forceful expression than in his oration upon release from jail in November 1895. There, rather than in the wistful strands of later legend, lay the themes that would inform his public career in the decades to come.

Meanwhile, the Socialist Party began to grow. While there were less than 10,000 formal party members in 1900, by 1905 there were 23,000. For Debs, it was the party of true Americanism. Salvatore says:

Capitalism, Debs told a Michigan audience in 1899, through its control of the means of production, would destroy the American family and thus undermine society itself: "When the American home falls the republic falls, and the brightest light that ever floated across the heavens of the nations goes out." On the stump or as the chairman of the 1904 Socialist platform committee, Debs repeatedly stressed that Socialism "make its appeal to the American people as the defender and preserver of the idea of liberty and self-government, in which the nation was born." Through collective control of the means of production, Debs insisted, a democratic

individualism might indeed be born. Against his perception of a destructive capitalist revolution, Debs pitted the prophetic promise of the Christian tradition and, amid appeals to Christ and Lincoln, relished the day when "the whole people will take the title-deed of Rockefeller's trusts and we will operate the . . . machinery of production and distribution."

By 1908 the Socialist Party had grown to 41,000 dues paying members. Debs was chosen a third time to run for President on the Socialist ticket. He had become a symbol of the hopes of the working class. Salvatore describes his effect on the crowds of listeners:

As a speaker, Debs was a compelling and commanding force. In an era given to long orations, his speeches often lasted two or more hours—but rarely did he bore an audience. His long, thin body pulsated with energy; his outstretched arms, extensions of that inner force, implored, emphasized, and above all embraced; the veins in his head bulged with concentration, and his eyes, piercing yet loving, seemed to acknowledge each individual in the audience. His voice ran a gamut of tones: mock whisper to normal conversation to full stentorian power. Yet from all accounts it was rarely forced or theatrical. His appeal, most frequently described by contemporaries as evangelical, transcended at that moment factional disagreements and led each in the audience to glimpse a different social order.

Heywood Broun, the sensitive cynic of 1920s journalism sensed Debs's magnetism. "I'm told," Broun reported, "that even those speeches of his which seem to any reader indifferent stuff, took on vitality from his presence." One "hard-bitten Socialist" confessed to Broun his confusion about this power. Deeply opposed to "sentimental flummery"—to calling others comrades, to rhetorical excesses and imprecise theory—as he considered it "a lot of bunk," the man was confounded in Debs's presence: "But the funny part of it is that when Debs says 'comrade' it is all right. He means it. That old man with the burning eyes actually believes that there can be such a thing as the brotherhood of man. And that's not the funniest part of it. As long as he's around I believe it myself."

Is this, one wonders, a precise account of what one human being can actually do for another—to bring to him a presence in which, by an act of grace, he can see beyond himself? Something of the sort seems to have taken place

for Arjuna in the eleventh discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, to some extent in Plato's *Phaedo*, and again in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

Where are we taken by the high visionary stance of these human or more than human expressions? Have they anything to do with history? Or are they somehow equally present at all moments of history? Yet, even so, they do not make history irrelevant. For the sage, history does not seem to count, yet for the rest of us it counts a great deal, and the sage does not exactly interfere in this, yet remains sage. The issues that engaged Debs for the whole of his life are not the issues of today. Now we are concerned with the plight of the small farmer, and will soon no doubt worry about the large farmer, too, although with a different point of view. We are worried about the exhaustion of topsoil, the spreading impurity of water and the diminution of water supply. The air we breathe is becoming unhealthy. The environment of the young is virtually indecent by comparison with what we should like for our children. Our political arrangements, whether local or international, excite little but fatigue and disgust. The right politics, in the eighteenth century, meant salvation, as Paine and others made clear. But today, as Jacques Ellul recently pointed out, politics everywhere spells ruin.

What makes boys from Texas go off and kill Vietnamese, and boys from Estonia go off and kill Afghans? Only politics, which claims to represent the common good, collective interests, the homeland, and all that.

What must we wean ourselves of, to avoid all this? What must we wean ourselves of *in any age*, through the whole gamut of changing issues and revised contentions? For a framework for considering this question, we go to the first chapter of A. H. Maslow's *Toward a Psychology of Being*, in which he defines his stance—the stance of "A Larger Jurisdiction for Psychology." He says (in this book published in 1962):

In essence I am deliberately rejecting our present easy distinction between sickness and health, at least as far as surface symptoms are concerned. I

maintain now that sickness might consist of *not* having symptoms when you should. Does health mean being symptom-free? I deny it. Which of the Nazis at Auschwitz or Dachau were healthy? Those with stricken conscience or those with a nice, clear, happy conscience? Was it possible for a profoundly human person not to feel conflict, suffering, depression, rage, etc.?

In a word, if you tell me you have a personality problem I am not certain until I know you better whether to say "Good!" or "I'm sorry." It depends on the reasons. And these, it seems, may be bad reasons, or they may be good reasons.

An example is the changing attitude of psychologists toward popularity, toward adjustment, even toward delinquency. Popular with whom? Perhaps it is better for a youngster to be *unpopular* with the neighboring snobs or with the local country club set. Adjusted to what? To a bad culture? To a dominating parent? What shall we think of a well-adjusted slave? A well-adjusted prisoner? Even the behavior problem boy is being looked upon with new tolerance. *Why* is he delinquent? Most often it is for sick reasons. But occasionally it is for good reasons and the boy is simply resisting exploitation, domination, neglect, contempt, and trampling upon. . . .

The question of desirable grief and pain or the necessity for it must also be faced. Is growth and self-fulfillment possible at all without pain and grief and sorrow and turmoil? If these are to some extent necessary and unavoidable, then to what extent? If grief and pain are sometimes necessary for the growth of the person, then we must learn not to protect people from them automatically as if they were always bad. Sometimes they may be good and desirable in view of the ultimate good consequences. Not allowing people to go through their pain, and protecting them from it, may turn out to be a kind of over-protection, which in turn implies a certain lack of respect for the integrity and the intrinsic nature and the future development of the individual.

Of one thing we can be sure: this wisdom—and it *is* wisdom—will be recognized as absolutely useless for his purposes by the politician. Both subtlety and delicacy are required simply to see the importance of what Maslow is saying here, to say nothing of putting it into practice. How would you put into a program a plan for distinguishing between people who need to be helped and those who ought to be left alone?

What better way *not* to get elected! In the hands of politicians, whether from innocent ignorance or guile, "helping" may often work backwards.

As Wes Jackson said recently, in his list of "Falsehoods of Farming," supporting the family farm is false because "nearly all of the agricultural legislation written over the past few decades has purported to support the family farm." Yet "In spite of the stated intent, most of the legislation has had the opposite effect." Needed, Jackson says, is the restoration of the rural community, on which the family really depends. Politicians have no idea what to do about this, nor would beneficial measures have much chance of being understood and being vote-getters.

It is more important to take note of the fact that Maslow's observation and counsels have practically nothing to do with history, where, we suppose, all our "problems" lie. The elements of health, as he proposes and understands them, are *constants* of human life. Wherever human communities have existed, now and at any time in the past, those elements have been present. Actually, the kind of thing he is speaking of as health is really transcendence, and this in fact is what he means by mental health.

Health, in short, lies in having the right motives, the right purposes, and in not betraying them in misrepresentative practices. How do we know what are the right motives? We know, that's all. Conscience informs us. There is that in every human being which knows what is right. Its voice may be muted by oppressive conditions, by popular lying habits, and a dozen other disreputable causes, but then a maddened sense of wrong bursts out in revolution, or simply in revolt and destruction, after which the long, slow process of rebuilding society must begin again.

It is possible—not easy but possible—to recognize in the life of Gene Debs his continuous struggle to maintain his motives uncorrupted by political practice. He believed above all in the integrity of individuals and he fought for the preservation of this quality in workingmen. He

understood the American resistance to Socialism in terms of our traditions—he felt the resistance in himself—but the Pullman strike wore away at his reluctance to embrace the Socialist stance. The utter ruthlessness of capitalist methods in relation to labor he found outrageous and intolerable. He became something like the figure of Christ for countless working men. He ran for President in 1920 in the prison garb of a convicted man in the federal prison in Atlanta, where he had been sent for opposing the draft for American participation in the first World War. In December of 1921, President Harding commuted his sentence and those of twenty-three other political prisoners and he left Atlanta to go home on Christmas Day, giving the five dollar bill provided by prison regulations to the committee working for the release of Sacco and Vanzetti. Weakened by the ordeal of prison, Debs died of a heart attack on Oct. 20, 1926.

Salvatore says in his Epilogue:

Debs was no mere hero, however, hovering above the crowd, beyond reach, revered, and thus easily dismissed. His public power rested in part upon personal qualities and in part on political ideas and programs, but his importance transcended both, for the critical fact was that for many Americans Debs embodied *their* experiences and *their* social protest. In this fashion the life of Debs had meaning for his audiences, and it has meaning for the generations since, beyond its personal qualities.

Debs will be long remembered for his statement on the day of his sentencing to Atlanta. Standing before the judge, he affirmed "his kinship with all living beings."

While there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free.

REVIEW

THE USES OF LANGUAGE

WE have been reading through a book which, taken as a whole, amounts to a kind of general education. It is *Bridging Worlds Through General Semantics*, a selection of thirty-four articles which have appeared in the General Semantics magazine *Et cetera* during the past forty years of its publication. The editor is Mary Morain, president of the International Society of General Semantics. (There is to be a second volume.) The contributors include some of the most distinguished thinkers of our time, among them P. W. Bridgman, Benjamin Lee Whorf, Garrett Hardin, Anatol Rapoport, Wendell Johnson, Nicholas Johnson, S. I. Hayakawa, Neil Postman, and Henry Perkinson. The price in paperback is \$7.50, the address: P.O. Box 0469, San Francisco, Calif. 94126.

What is General Semantics? A proper definition would take much more space than we have available. The term, however, is owed to Alfred Korzybski, because of its derivation from the Greek root "to mean" or "to signify." The subject-matter is the uses of language, also its misuses. Korzybski's book, *Science and Sanity*, is the fundamental text. It came out in 1933.

An indication of the kind of thing that interests general semanticists is given by Irving J. Lee in his paper, "Evaluation: With and Without Words." He tells two anecdotes, both relating to World War II:

On a crowded bus, a soldier stood up and offered his seat to a woman. She snubbed his courtesy with the remark:

"No thank you, I don't want your seat. Anyway, you should be in Italy with my son."

"In what part of Italy is your son located?" the soldier calmly inquired.

"I don't know," snapped the woman.

"I wish you did," because you might tell him to look around for my arm over there," smiled the soldier.

It was then the woman observed that his right sleeve was empty.

The writer comments:

Notice that she took a certain view or attitude toward the boy's wartime status. Notice that she "felt" and "thought" a certain way about him, that she interpreted the boy's role in terms of a certain set of premises or assumptions—in short she evaluated in a certain pattern. What did she do? In technical terms, she identified what she saw with her assumptions or creeds about it; she confused a private knowledge of the situation with the situation itself; she took on a finality with respect to her judgment rarely justified by events, etc., etc. Her evaluation can be characterized as, say, stupid, mean, narrow, blind, immature.

The other story Mr. Lee tells is from the official report on the attack on Pearl Harbor, concerned with the failure of the Aircraft Warning Service to advise of approaching planes

There are described the incidents surrounding Lt. Tyler's snappy "Forget it," when Pvt. Lockard reported, minutes before the fatal attack, that the oscilloscope indicated a large number of planes approaching from a direction three degrees of north. Lt. Tyler's evaluation of the situation was of a piece with our unnamed woman's. He, too, assumed a knowledge he did not have. He, too, identified his assumptions with a more precise description of the events. He, too, acted in unreflective signal fashion. That this is not a mere grasping at minutiae is clear in the point the Board makes: if the Lieutenant's sizing-up of the situation had been characterized by somewhat more rigor, then "the losses might have been very greatly lessened."

Irving Lee regards these stories of the woman and the lieutenant as providing an approach to Korzybski's study of human behavior, saying:

He asks: should we not do something about the woman's and the Lieutenant's evaluation so as to *prevent* such stupidity and disordering in other moments of their living? His effort to work out specific, usable, and teachable methods by which one can be trained in the means of proper evaluation is the heart of what students of general semantics study. Korzybski's great and enduring contribution to me, then, was the fact that he had evolved a means of checking the *adequacy* of our evaluations: i.e., he had a scheme by which one could describe the difference

between the kinds of evaluation mechanisms which produce the degrees of survival and nonsurvival, of maturity and infantilism, of discrimination and identification, of the critical and the thoughtless, which human beings show. He cataloged a very large number of the patterns of evaluation which, in our time, play a role in multiplying the maladjustments, confusions, conflicts, and prejudices in daily life. And at the same time he was able to describe the approaches and techniques of those whose evaluations have led to the productive and significant contributions to our culture.

The value of the contribution by P. W. Bridgman, the physicist, "Science and Common Sense," lies in the clarity with which he shows how scientific advance in relativity theory and quantum theory has obliged the theorists to part with common sense. The lesson, he says, is that "the world is not constructed according to the principles of common sense." The rules of common sense are familiar and necessary in the region of everyday experience, but according to relativity theory they break down in the world of high velocities; similarly, they do not work in "the world of the very small." A careful study of Bridgman's article acquaints the reader with the larger meaning of these advances in physical theory.

Logic, too, is vulnerable to the increasingly sophisticated insights of modern mathematics. Bridgman says:

Many of the well-known paradoxes of logic arise when a system tries to deal with itself. . . . Within the last few years a theorem with regard to such a system has been proved, a theorem that has been hailed among logicians as a truly epoch-making discovery in logic. This theorem was enunciated by Gödel, now [1955] in the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. In very crude language, the theorem states that no logical system can ever prove that it itself is a perfect system in the sense that it may not contain concealed self-contradictions. This theorem, at one stroke, stultified the efforts of the circle-squarers and the angle-bisectors. Mathematicians had long been trying to prove by the principles of mathematics that mathematics contains no hidden inconsistencies, inconsistencies that some day might be discovered and bring down the whole mathematical edifice in ruins. But Gödel's theorem showed that this is an

impossible sort of thing to prove. The conclusion is that, if one wants to prove that mathematics is free from concealed self-contradiction, one must use other principles beyond and over those in question. We here encounter a regress that has no logical end and, humanly, ends in human weariness and the finite length of human life. This means that the human intelligence can never be sure of itself; it is not a tool capable of unlimited perfectibility, as is so often fondly imagined. All we can ever say is that, up to the present, we have found no inconsistencies where we have looked.

Such discoveries have a distinctly chastening effect on serious scientific thinkers, who are learning from their own work that the cocksure certainty of the late nineteenth century in science—born partly from the polemical encounter with outraged religionists—cannot be justified. Bridgman offers a thoughtful conclusion:

It seems to me that our eyes are gradually opening. We are coming to recognize that it is a simple matter of observation that the observer is part of what he observes and that the thinker is part of what he thinks. We do not passively observe the universe from the outside, but we are all in it up to our necks, and there is no escape. It would be difficult to imagine anything more contrary to the tenets of common sense or to the attitude of the human race since it has begun to think. The common-sense way of handling our minds has, without doubt, been of decisive importance, and the discovery of the common-sense way of thinking was, doubtless, in the beginning a bit of an invention, perhaps the most important invention ever made. One of the things that we are in fact doing in accepting the common-sense way of thinking is to declare that, for our purposes, we do not need to complicate our thinking by continually holding ourselves to an awareness that the thinker cannot be divorced from what he thinks. We have thus brought about a tremendous simplification in our intellectual processes, and in the history of the human race the common-sense attitude has been more than justified. It seems to me, however, that we are approaching a position where we can recognize the limit of usefulness of this way of thinking.

Others, too, have reached this conclusion, which may explain the somewhat sudden interest in certain ancient philosophers, as for example in

the aphorisms of Patanjali, and in Plato's attitude toward the sciences concerned with the "world of becoming," which is always in flux. What Bridgman says about relativity theory and quantum theory seems to represent a growing awareness of the limitations of intellect, which helps to draw attention to the intuitive aspect of human knowing and to wondering about the sources in human beings of the higher assumptions which may turn out to be the actual ground of all that we know.

Another article which has a civilizing effect is Benjamin Lee Whorf's study of the Hopi language—"An American Indian Model of the Universe"—in which this unusual writer shows the subtlety and sophistication of the Hopi way of thinking in respect to time and space. There are a number of other discussions in this collection that illustrate what we said at the beginning—that this book amounts to "a kind of general education."

COMMENTARY
PEACE-MAKER IN KANSAS

IT would be difficult to find another present-day writer like Wes Jackson who is able to relate philosophical understanding and cultural insight, along with a penetrating grasp of human nature, to the practical problems of the American farmer, and to show at the same time that these problems belong not just to the farmers but to us all. (See "Children.") Here is a man who understands agriculture and is willing to work on projects that may not prove their merit for twenty-five or fifty years, such as developing a perennial food grain that will be kind to the land and nourish human beings. He is not only willing to do this, but he has turned the project into an unusual educational undertaking.

This week's "Children" is worth reading several times over, just to get the full impact of what Wes Jackson says. He may skip around, but you can always figure out what he is getting at. Then, his wife's account of how the Land Institute got started—of the cooperation of the students to keep it going, the growth of the place, and the vision it represents—these are more than background features; they are grounds for actual hope.

A great deal of money is now being spent by earnest and well-intentioned people to alter the course of the country from the direction of nuclear or any kind of war. No one knows how much such efforts are accomplishing; hardly anyone understands what is the best thing to do about stopping war; but anyone with any sense ought to be able to see that a society founded on the kind of agriculture Jackson would have us create would be a peaceful society. Why? Because in such a society much more than four per cent of our population would be in agriculture, and these people would be healthy, sensible, and eventually recognized as the foundation of a *good* society. Jackson, it seems, has enough to keep going, but a man with his talents ought not to have to spend

time raising money. And he may be a far more efficient "peace-maker" than most of the "conferees" around the country who get so much space in the papers. Can you think of a better place to go for a youth of college age to get an education than the Land Institute?

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves WHAT CAN BE DONE

HARDLY a week goes by without a feature story in one of the better newspapers about the troubles of American farmers. So many of them are going broke. The question is why. Are they inefficient, lacking in foresight, without good business sense? What help should be given to students for understanding this problem?

A brief article by Wes Jackson in the spring *Land Report* (issued by the Land Institute, Route 3, Salina, Kans. 67401) gives the background for considering the plight of the American farmer. He begins:

The farmer and the farm, as a unit, stands between the voiceless environment and the vociferous public. Farmers are not exactly quiet, of course, but because they are such a dispersed minority, in effect, they are. . . . It doesn't matter that numerous farmers who have gone or will go bankrupt have had or still have millions of dollars worth of assets. If we were to do a proper accounting, nature has trillions upon trillions of dollars worth of assets and is in trouble. What if we had to pay the energy cost for the solar irrigation we call rain, for example? The potential for exploitation has always been the most lucrative where the assets are greatest.

. . . we love the environment and the farm and the farmer in about the same way that we love Indians. It is a form of condescension; a poorly masked way of despising our source. We don't really want to live in wilderness except perhaps during vacation. But we do want clean air and water as a pristine vestige of wilderness. Most of us don't want to *live* on a farm either, though most of us would like to *reside* there. Most of us don't want to live with the Indians, or live the way they did prior to being on reservations.

Farm debt is a derivative of society's attitude toward the farm and farmers. Farm debt is like environmental debt except that with farm debt, the farmer gets hurt directly and can complain. But because farmers are so few and so dispersed, they are scarcely heard. The farmer and the farm like the "environment," are looked upon as a way to offset short term interests—like a national balance of trade

deficits. It is a place where we can externalize costs. For example, the cost of pesticides to the farmer and the cost of pesticides to the soil and groundwater are regarded similarly by the public: "a serious problem that something ought to be done about." Land prices, equipment prices, and fuel prices generate overdrafts when prices are low or yield is down. Talk within the smoked glass cubicles at the bank is serious then. Voices are low. (Now bankers are in trouble. It becomes a farm crisis when the banks are in trouble, not when the Russians back out of a grain deal.) . . .

Overdrafts at the bank are like overdrafts from the aquifer which supplies eight states with water. And meanwhile the water we have shows the presence of too many nitrates and pesticide pollution. So the problems of the farmer multiply. He has "bad luck." Now Jackson gets down to business:

The farm problem is not a financial crisis so much as a failure of culture. It will not be—cannot be—solved by a new farm program so long as the farm family is the primary locus for receiving money. The farm family cannot exist in any dignified sort of way without rural community. It is like giving Indians monthly government handouts as they muddle along in a reservation that is the epitome of a destroyed culture. The very existence of such an abstraction, as a reservation boundary, has destroyed the chance for the return of Indian culture. Today's reservations are as lethal as measles, smallpox epidemics, and cavalry charges were earlier. And so Indians live on subsidy, without dignity. The abstract wall created Indian dependency. For today's farmers, the descendants of the white settlers who ruined Indian life, disaster takes the form of destruction of rural community by the industrial state. . . .

If we were really serious about helping the farmer, we would treat agriculture as inherently biological and cultural, not industrial. We would see more crop rotation, strip cropping, more animals on the farm and none in large feedlots, manure on the fields, and we would see more rural schools, rural churches, and rural baseball.

The conclusion:

Agriculture is over-capitalized and farmers have debt largely because the extraction or mining economy has moved to the fields. We need economic models which will account for the cycling of materials and handle the flow of energy—but not just any energy—contemporary energy (sunlight, non-

fossil, non-nuclear) in an orderly and non-disruptive manner. This model can be found in nearly all natural ecosystems of the planet and is trustable because it was hard won in particular places over the globe during billions of years of evolution. Sometimes to cope is to change, but not often enough. We need to be carrying economic models of sustainability in our heads that can be found in nature or in primitive cultures, so that a proposal for a change to help farmers cope with a bad situation can be evaluated against some standard of permanence. In such a manner we may be able to change the context for every citizen and for the environment, rural or urban. Until then, nearly all that we spend on a problem—the environment, Indians, farmers—will be more for the purpose of coping than for change.

The story of Jackson's career is told by his wife and collaborator, Dana Jackson, in the same issue of *Land Report*, which she edits. (Subscription, \$5.00.) She says:

Wes Jackson started The Land Institute in the fall of 1976 as an organization devoted to a search for alternatives in agriculture, energy, shelter, and waste management. He wanted to teach a small number of students and have physical work be a part of the curriculum. Having taught the "ain't it awful" courses for three years in the Environmental Center which he organized at California State University, Sacramento, he was eager to take a more positive approach. He wanted students to work on projects based on less energy and materials--intensive materials, to search for ways to provide for human needs without degrading the environment. He constructed a strange building made out of mostly scrap materials as a classroom, office and shop and recruited seven students. The building burned down in October, and Wes offered the students refunds on their tuition if they wished to leave the program. The seven students told Wes that the kind of education he was offering at The Land Institute was not dependent on a special building, and they would stay. The group then began meeting in the Jackson house for morning classes. Members of the board of directors contributed some extra money to acquire materials and a few replacement tools and the students continued their projects.

The loyalty of the students was matched by friends and neighbors in the community, and with their help, we began constructing a new building right over the old site. It took a year to replace the

first building; by this time, I was thoroughly involved with Wes in the development of The Land Institute. He and I finished woodwork in the classroom, and Wes laid the carpet just in time for the Smoky Hills Audubon Society to meet there for the postbird count dinner in December, 1977.

Eighty-eight students and eight years later, The Land Institute is still in operation. From a budget of \$10,000 in 1976, and a staff of one, we have grown to a \$200,000 yearly budget and have six staff members. Instead of worrying about finding enough tuition-paying students, we chose ten out of approximately 100 inquiries and thirty good applicants to receive scholarships as agricultural interns each year (\$70,000 of our budget). We publish three *Land Reports* and one *Research Supplement* each year, and have the copyright on a new book called *Meeting the Expectations of the Land*. Our annual Prairie Festival in the spring has become a popular event, and nearly 200 people came to our Fall Visitors' Day. I think The Land Institute is doing good work. . . .

The Land's educational program is inextricably tied in with our research into the potential of perennial polycultures to replace annual monocultures on sloping farmland. We are the first institution to devote our work to the challenge of breeding perennial crops which will be grown at an ecosystem, rather than a population, level. As an independent, privately-funded organization, we have the capability, the dedication and, therefore, a responsibility to continue our research program. What we learn could make the difference in food-production potential for our grandchildren, after the shortsighted industrial agriculturalists have destroyed our soil.

This is the kind of educational enterprise the country needs. The Jacksons have shown what can be done.

FRONTIERS A Persistent Question

THE question of whether or not there is something in human beings which survives the death of the body has been a "frontier" inquiry for generations. The "modern" view—which means little more than "recent"—is that, since humans *are* their bodies, survival is a belief that belongs only to the religious or superstitious past. This outlook dates from the days of the eighteenth century when the mechanistic opinions of the scientific view of the world, reinforced by the teachings of Descartes and the simplification of Newtonian formulas, spread around the Western world to include all who had claim to an education. While believers in the traditional religions were hardly affected by this change, the erosion of inherited faith went on, decade by decade, among the learned and by the nineteenth century, with the advent of Darwinism, the domination of materialism was very nearly complete.

But then, during the last half of the nineteenth century, with the beginnings of Spiritualistic phenomena in 1848 in America, a counter-current suggesting renewed possibility of survival made itself felt. The chief effect of these happenings—"communications" from the dead—was the establishment of psychic sects led by "mediums" of various sorts, although a handful of daring scientists carried on experiments with mediums and declared that impartial investigators would find that at least some of the claims of the Spiritualists could be confirmed. Among these scientists were men of the stature of William Crookes in England, and the chemist, Robert Hare, in the United States.

The first "scientific" inquiry into the phenomena of Spiritualism was undertaken in 1869 by a committee of the London Dialectical Society, which produced a report favorable to further investigation. Some years later (in 1882) the London Society for Psychical Research was

formed to study mesmeric, psychical, and Spiritualistic phenomena, and has since published numerous papers reporting the work of its members. Years later, in the United States, William James carried on similar researches, the reports of which are now available in *William James on Psychical Research* (Viking, 1960) edited by Gardner Murphy and Robert O. Ballou. Another line of psychic research was begun by the British psychologist William McDougall, who taught psychology at Harvard for years, then, in the late 1920s, went to Duke University and began the parapsychological approach which drew the Rhines to Duke, where they fulfilled and extended the program that McDougall had conceived.

In the years since, hundreds of books have been published dealing with psychic research. One such volume, David H. Lund's *Death and Consciousness* (McFarland & Co., Jefferson, North Carolina, 1985, \$18.95), is a systematic inquiry into the possibility of life after death. The author is familiar with the extensive literature on this question and cites from it various cases suggestive of survival. These include the extraordinary recollections of people who nearly died, but were brought back to life, as reported by Raymond in *Life After Life*, the appearance of apparitions, and communications through mediums. Nothing is said in the book concerning the Theosophical criticism of mediumistic phenomena, an omission perhaps to be expected of writers who make a conventional approach to the subject. Yet the explanations given by H. P. Blavatsky of psychic happenings might clear away many misconceptions. Mr. Lund seems most at home in the area of speculative thought concerning abstract possibilities. Of particular interest is a quotation he provides from R. H. Thouless and B. P. Wiesner on extra-sensory perception, concerned with whether or not telepathy and clairvoyance should be thought of as "normal." These writers say:

They may be no more "paranormal" than the facts following from Einstein's theory of relativity.

Physicists do not regard the Newtonian laws of motion as "normal" and those motion and gravitational effects which follow the principles of relativity as paranormal; they regard the Newtonian principles as a special case of a more general set of principles which includes also the relativity phenomenon. This special case happens to be more familiar than the exceptions to it because most observable phenomena of movement occur within the limits of velocity for which the Newtonian principles are approximately true. If we had been born in a universe in which all velocities of bodies were near that of light, then the Einstein laws would have been the familiar ones.

In 1940, in the October issue of the British journal, *Philosophy*, Prof. H. H. Price of Oxford made a similar suggestion, beginning with a question:

Ought we perhaps to assume that Clairvoyance is our normal state, and that ordinary perception is something subnormal, a kind of myopia? The question you ask depends upon the expectation with which you begin. Ought we to have expected that by rights, so to speak, every mind would be aware of everything, or, at any rate, of an indefinitely wide range of things? The puzzle would then be to explain why the ordinary human mind is in fact aware of so little. We might then conjecture that our sense-organs and afferent nerves (which, of course, are physiologically connected with our organs of action, *i.e.*, with the muscular system) are arranged to *prevent us from attending* to more than a small bit of the material world—that bit which is relevant to us as animal organisms. We might still have an unconscious "contact"—I can think of no adequate phrase—with all sorts of other things, but the effects of it would be shut out from consciousness except on rare occasions, when the physiological mechanism of stimulus and response is somewhat deranged. In that case, what prevents us from being clairvoyant all the time is—in M. Bergson's phrase *l'attention à la vie*.

The chapter on mediumship is of particular interest since Mr. Lund draws on the communications of the most distinguished of mediums. However, not enough attention is given to the vast amount of nonsense obtained in this way. After a series of sittings, C.E.M. Joad, the English philosopher, was constrained to remark that "if ghosts have souls, they certainly have no brains!" In 1927, G. W. Lambert contributed to

the *Proceedings* of the London Society for Psychical Research (XXXVI, 393-413) a paper on the psychology of Plotinus which enables the student of psychic phenomena to account for fragmentary and confused communications. Plotinus suggests that there may be incoherent "ends" and "bits" of the psyche of the deceased which are picked up and repeated by the mediums. This would explain the irrational content of so many of the messages obtained in seances.

The chapter on Reincarnation ("Memories of Prior Lives") is perhaps the most persuasive. Most of the testimony is from children who remember dying as a child in a former life and have been able to identify their former parents and surroundings. A child with this sort of memory, the author says, could hardly have a better basis for his claim to have lived before.

That is to say, cases of this sort, if the accounts we have of them are accurate, provide the best possible kind of evidence for thinking that the person having such memories is a reincarnation of a deceased person. Indeed, such accounts, if accurate, constitute an account of *what it means* to say that a deceased person has reincarnated in another body.

David Lund, at any rate, is one of those who do not think that death is the end for human beings. His book may lead others to begin thinking in the same way.