

Green Revolution

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BORSODI'S SEARCH FOR HONEST MONEY

WHAT WAS IT that drove Ralph Borsodi at the age of 83 in 1967 to try to launch a world wide non-profit and non-governmental banking program which would provide credit to small farmers in poor countries? And what motivated him a few years later to launch, almost single-handedly, a local currency in Exeter, NH, an accomplishment that brought reporters from *Time* magazine, *Forbes* and many others to interview him in Exeter?

At the end of a long life of promoting, advocating and practicing decentralism, Borsodi said, "Unless the dishonest centralized government monopoly of money can be broken, no significant social reform is possible." Moreover, he saw and predicted the end of the present world wide monetary system which creates inflation, and impoverishes the poor people of the world. It would not surprise him to read the recent articles in the *Wall Street Journal* and every other news magazine (*Time* lead-line, "Debt Bomb Threatens World Financial System"). It was perfectly clear to him that the international monetary system was headed for collapse and he guessed that it might be the failure or the inability of the poor countries to repay their debts to the IMF, World Bank, and the banks of the industrialized countries that would trigger massive world wide inflation and finally collapse of the present system. It would only have surprised him that the system has held together as long as it has with only patch work solutions.

It was for all these reasons that he spent the last years of his life and his energy, often at great risk to his health, concentrated on how to make a beginning towards breaking the monopoly of the central government monetary system. All of the schemes which he devised were designed to challenge that system. He had convinced J.P. Narayan, the leader of the Gandhian Sarvodaya movement in India to help him launch the International Independence Foundation, which would have provided investors/depositors with a guarantee against government created inflation, as well as small farmers with low interest loans (high interest rates are today the primary reason for the highest rate of bankruptcy among farmers in the U.S. since the great depression). When that scheme was frustrated as a result of J.P.'s decision to concentrate his energy on working with the relief program in India where the failure of the monsoons had created havoc and starvation in the state of Bihar, Borsodi decided to try to start a small experimental program in India with some of his own money. He left by way of London to initiate this program, but he was forced to give it up when his strength gave out in London and his doctor ordered him to return to the States.

But the problem and the need to make a beginning with an honest money system continued to plague him. He considered writing a book and began extensive research and written notes. But, finally, after two or three years — when he was reading the *New York Times* headline announcing the increasing inflation — he said to himself, "Why write a book? Everyone writes books and no one pays any attention to them." It was at that point, that he decided to launch what he later came to call "The Exeter Experiment."

He was in California at the time and immediately upon his return to Exeter, N.H., his home, he contacted the president of the local bank, a friend of his, to obtain his cooperation in the proposed experiment. The bank president agreed to cooperate by having the bank act as a "money changer" and to accept deposits for the experiment. As a "money changer", the bank would simply agree to exchange dollars which Borsodi would provide, for the notes ("Constants," Borsodi called them) which Borsodi

would issue. People wishing to join in the experiment would deposit money in the Exeter Bank in a joint checking account which would, then, be kept in Constants rather than dollars. Since Constants were based on a "basket" of commodities and an index of these commodities which Borsodi had developed, they were in effect, protected from inflation. In addition, Borsodi issued Constant notes as well as silver coins and sold them for dollars at the Constant exchange rate.

To everybody's surprise, even including Borsodi, many people bought Constant notes and made deposits in the bank checking account. At the same time Constants began to circulate around the town of Exeter, where restaurants and other businesses accepted them in payment. If these businesses received more Constants in trade than they could use for their own buying needs, the owners could go to the bank and exchange them for dollars at the then going exchange rate. Since dollars were going down in value relative to Constants as determined by the index, those people holding Constants were reluctant to exchange them since they would lose on the exchange. For this reason, and, therefore, Borsodi did not have to keep many dollars on hand at the bank for exchange purposes.

His objective was to invest the dollar deposits in most, if not all, of the commodities in the "basket" (thirty commodities which represented the most important commodities in World trade — agricultural products, energy, and minerals). He began investing in the most storable commodity available, silver (gold was still illegal for U.S. citizens to buy at that time). Silver, with gold and platinum, was and is, one of the metals which has been traditionally associated with "real" money in the past. Borsodi, however, wanted to eventually invest much more heavily in the other commodities in the basket — especially agricultural commodities such as wheat and rice which are universally used and needed throughout the world. But this part of his scheme would be the most difficult, he knew, because he devised a complicated scheme which would have utilized expert "spot market" arbitrage eventually. But that would involve literally millions of dollars (or Constants) worth of grain and other products.

The Experiment, then, was obviously limited in scope. Unless some large bank, or large corporation would step in and involve itself in helping to launch a new, independent and genuine world, as well as local currency, the Experiment would remain just that, an experiment. Whether Borsodi, really expected the Experiment to expand to a world level, I do not know. But it did not happen and again his doctor told him he would have to give up the very difficult job he had taken on in the Experiment with only a small handful of inexperienced volunteers to help him.

As one of the volunteers helping Borsodi in the Experiment and also involved in the International Foundation attempt, I have continued over the years to search for ways in which this Herculean effort of Borsodi's could be carried forward. In an objective evaluation of the Exeter Experiment, it seemed to me that several aspects of the experiment had been developed successfully and could be duplicated elsewhere. One of these was the strategy of utilizing small local banks as the administrative agent for starting a new monetary system. As Borsodi often pointed out, local banks are not the problem in themselves. The problem is that they have to deal with dollars only and the issuing of dollars is a monopoly of the centralized government controlled system. Local banks provide an important and needed service in accepting

deposits, making loans, keeping accounts, and collecting payments on loans.

The second lesson which I think the Exeter Experiment demonstrated, was the interest which people had in using a new kind of currency which was not subject to government created inflation. (As one Exeter citizen put it, "Whose money is funny anyway, his money or the government's?") Local businesses also accepted the money in payment, partly because they knew that customers might go elsewhere if they didn't, partly because some of them, at least, realized that the creation of a local currency would be in their interest, and in any case, they knew that they could go to the bank and exchange Constants for dollars if necessary. Certainly, at this level, the bank involvement helped tremendously to give confidence to the whole project, and the merchants in particular. Further, people seemed to realize that here was money, unlike government money, which was backed by something real — the commodities themselves, all of which were listed on the notes, and they could also see on a week by week, or month by month basis, as the index (or the exchange rate between dollars and Constants) was published, that Constants were gaining in value against dollars. This also increased confidence.

Two years after moving from Boston to Great Barrington, in discussion with a group of like-minded people, we decided that we might make a beginning in the process of issuing a local currency by first capitalizing on Borsodi's demonstration of the value of involving a local bank. But we felt it would be a mistake to initiate this process with a local currency itself. For one thing, we had not proven ourselves to local bankers, they would not necessarily have confidence in us. We would have to create that confidence, and that would mean creating an organization.

Moreover, going back to the original International Foundation concept of Borsodi's, we realized that creating a local currency, in and of itself, was not of tremendous value, unless it could be tied to the purpose of creating greater local or regional self-reliance, and thus be used for decentralizing the present system. After all, this was the major purpose behind the original Foundation, and, in one sense, the creation, or issuing of a non-inflationary currency was important primarily because it would attract investment of dollars into a decentralized framework of development. The fact that out of this scheme would come a local currency was, from the point of view of local development, almost secondary. In other words, if as is presently true all over the world, local deposits in dollars were not sucked out of the local area into the huge metropolitan areas and into the big corporations which can afford to pay the highest interest rates, then even dollars could be made to serve a more useful purpose.

Out of this thinking grew the SHARE program which stands for Self-Help Association for a Regional Economy. Like the Exeter Experiment, the SHARE program utilizes the administrative services of a local bank. Like the Experiment, depositors put their money in a joint account at the bank. Unlike the Experiment, but like the International Foundation, the primary purpose of this money (dollars) is to collateralize small loans to local producers (farmers, small businesses, cottage industries, etc.) What is most unique about the SHARE program is the criteria which are used by the SHARE loan committee for making a loan. The primary criteria, aside from sound financial considerations is that the loan will increase local self-reliance, but in addition the criteria include ecological considerations as well as encouraging distribution of profits to workers and to the community as a whole. What are the advantages of the SHARE program?

1. Although the bank makes the loan and collects payments, the decision on the loan is made by the SHARE board elected by the members.
2. Low interest to borrowers — about two-thirds the going bank rate. This is possible because the SHARE depositors take the risk and the bank only receives a fee for its administrative services.
3. Depositors receive the same rate as the usual 90 day notice savings deposit account (about 6%).

4. Depositors are assured that their money is being used locally to improve or encourage the local economy, and this helps them eventually also.

5. A system of peer Associations (Agriculture, Small Business, etc.) is established which first approve the loans and secondly monitor them and provide technical assistance if necessary. This system provides the best guarantee against bad loans. bad loans.

But we recognize that the SHARE program, which is very much like a Credit Union, is only the first step towards creating a local currency and thereby an independent local economy. It's major advantage, from this perspective, is that it is building a base, a constituency of depositors in the community and confidence in community — as well as developing a strong working relationship with the local banks, merchants and farmers in the area.

— Robert Swann

Robert Swann is Executive Director of the Schumacher Society, Great Barrington, Mass. He was closely associated with Ralph Borsodi in the creation of the International Independence Institute, chartered in Luxembourg.

CALIFORNIA SCHOOL OF LIVING ACTION IN 1983 REPORT OF SUMMER SOJOURN Mildred J. Loomis

BY WAY OF telephones and aircraft, I'm 3000 miles from home, stimulated by interaction with old and new friends. A first response is gratitude that such friends and technology exist, to make such rewarding encounters possible. The sheer exultation of 'take-off,' watching the cities, villages, fields and streams disappear as we rise above the clouds; the physical comfort — food and friendly stewardesses and passengers. The excitement in a few hours of crossing the Rockies, and before we know it landing in the City of Angels!

There to be met by Tlaloch Tokudo, Hawaiian University professor, who in late June, came collecting Borsodi literature at York, Pa. School of Living Center; and to be whisked off to his parents' LA home. More conversation on what I like best to discuss — "Is a green revolution possible?" They are attentive to how active, how extended, the decentralist response is now compared to when S. o L. started in the Thirties and Forties! More questions during breakfast, and collecting seeds from their beautiful gardens.

Discussion continues next morning with Morgan Harris, enroute to Santa Barbara for a week's annual conference with Georgists. Morgan and I hark back to our meeting at a similar conference in New York City 44 years ago! and our seeking/acting for a 'more human world' ever since. We recall our 1939 session at Suffern N.Y. School of Living where we christened our movement 'the green revolution' (described in *Alternative Americas*); and marvel at the correspondence and meetings we have shared since then.

1983 Henry George Conference

Twenty-five directors of Henry George Schools gathered for reports and planning in the pre-conference at the Francisco Torre Hotel in nearby Goleta, Calif.; a hundred more staunch Georgists shared the sessions July 14-17. Active Georgist centers with classes in fundamental economics were reported from Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, Alberta, Canada; Beloit, Mich., St. Louis, Chicago, Mobile, Ala., Pittsburg, Philadelphia, Newark, Del., New York City, Boston. Result, many speeches reminding and quoting from Henry George's words; and repeated laments that "We are not doing enough. How can we reach more people with George's message of justice and freedom?"

Some of these speeches are available in print. Those I highly value include: "Georgist History of Principles and Practices," by Dr. Mason Gaffney, a long-time Georgist and history professor at Redlands, University of California; an 8-page outline by Morgan Harris on "A Political Campaign to Put George's Principles into Law;" and from the Jefferson Research Center, Dr. Frank Goble's "Conquering Hurdles to Communicating

George's Ideas." To this last, Dan Sullivan and I added ideas for training in the new discipline of *group process*. Mine referred especially to the assist from new brain research in Dr. J. C. Pearce's book, which I entitle "How The Brain Works" but which is a best seller as "The Miracle Child." (Bantam Publishers). His stimulating physiology shows that lack of oxygen to the brain accounts for unhealed brain lesions and a permanent lack of ability to do abstract thinking; and for alarming "dependence on material and sense objects." (See GR, No. 38, Summer 1981).

COLORFUL GEORGISTS Georgists are revolutionaries, but certainly not "red" in the Russian sense, and generally not as "green" as I'd like to see them. I enjoy personal friendship with many; the articulate Jack Schwartzman, editor of *Fragments* (wrong title for his dynamic paper); Bob Clancy, President, Henry George Organizations, whom I've known since he wrote his pamphlet, *A Seed Was Sown*, in 1939 as a teen-ager; his assistant, Mark Sullivan, editor of the anarchistic *Storm*, and member of SoL board; Dan Sullivan, Pittsburg writer and teacher; Allana Hartzok and Bob Scrofani, effective young directors of San Francisco Henry George School; Mike Curtis who teaches George's fundamental economics in Newark, Del. penitentiary; Walt Rybeck, assistant to Pennsylvania Congressman Coyne, who shared "Georgist Ideas in the World's Religions," Artie Yeatman voiced his decentralist-Georgist concept of "The World I'd Like to See;" Dixie Wood of Los Angeles graciously transported us everywhere; Kathryn and Frank Haydock of Elk Grove helped plan a SoL community in California, and took me to the restaurant of Robert Borsodi (grandson of RB) on the University of California campus at Goleta.

Attorneys Floyd Morrow and Tom Sherard of San Diego added to the program, delighting me with their plan for a series of adult education courses stemming from Ralph Borsodi's *Universal Problems of Living!* Is there any doubt why I cross the continent (and sometimes the oceans) to participate with others who are oriented in the Georgist and School of Living principles and practices?

"Prime Need for Unifying Concepts" —

Never in my life have circumstances provided the level and effort of exchange as in two days (18 hours) of discussion in San Diego with Don Werkheiser — teacher, psychologist, 'integrative thinker' and writer. I knew it would be like that. Don lived with us at the Ohio Lane's End homestead back in the Fifties and Sixties. He was a challenger then and time has increased rather than diminished his insight and articulation. Cherished memories, charts and articles from his files assist me — but his own statement suffices for this report.

Integrative Psychology and Social Reform by Don Werkheiser

"I'm completing a book which defines, elaborates and charts how the original stuff of the world, (ENERGY) develops into various levels — non-human and human; and how they interact (and can be used) to develop or damage human growth and social systems. A very elemental graph indicates the scope of the book:

Non-human energy	} Rocks, matter, earth, water	
Human energy	{	Environmental groups
		Individuals
		Humans, with four levels
		{ Human brain Mammalian Brain Reptilian brain Cells, organs

"I am familiar with Ralph Borsodi's work; and want to relate constructively to members and friends of the School of Living, to share our similarities and differences, to discover and work for mutually agreeable goals.

"Ralph Borsodi did useful, eclectic work in arranging information for adult study and action. He rightly saw that a human culture should begin with individuals, and to include the family, the region, the globe. (Note that he eliminated "nation," i.e., the group of compulsion). He rightly prescribed that the modern homestead is a viable, person-developing life style.

"Borsodi rightly went beyond 'homesteading,' but most of his followers have not. When I was living at the Loomis Lane's End homestead I began thinking about (and developing) "unifying concepts" for the social sciences, such as are used in the discipline of 'scientific method.' Not much response came to my early efforts — and I have worked, over the years, largely alone in writing and publishing it.

"Ralph Borsodi, I think rightly divided his 'problems of living' into two groups — into the practical do-it-yourself problems, and the planning-and-larger social problems. At this juncture, 1983, mostly the former, practical, do-it-yourself aspects, are worked on and put into action. School of Living, in my opinion, needs to do more with the second — social problems — in order to realize the Schools' (and the world's) potentials.

Obviously, social-action (i.e., "society") can proceed in either of two directions: toward liberty, or toward rulership-authoritarianism. (ed. note: Forgive this reminder that this observation is the first sentence in *Alternative Americas* (1980, \$5.95), describing nine current groups, with their persons/ways of proceeding in second direction — M.L.). Obvious to many, is that our modern dilemma is caused by our proceeding in the second (sovereignty) direction. (Werkheiser calls this, single operant relationships — SOR — where some people make decisions for others). My work and my book is to define-chart the libertarian, non-sovereign, mutual (MOR) ways to go now for more human development. More of us must successfully break away from 'master sovereignty.' We need better psychology and better social action. There have been some attempts.

"Protestants were right in breaking away from master toward individual sovereignty. But they applied it only to religion. In other areas, — in family, education, community, social, economic and political areas — master sovereignty is triumphing today. My work is offered to guide in mutual option relationships (MOR). I hope it is not too late."

(Ed. Note: School of Living seeks help in arranging costs and remuneration toward Don working more directly (as a staff member) with School of Living. Please send suggestions. — M.L.)

San Diego Sonnewald Homestead

Under the window in Willa Lefever's and Tom Rolan's home in suburban San Diego is a bed of ripening strawberries. Across a bit of lawn and the sidewalk — tall seven-foot stalks of sweet corn in her curb garden, hiding the house across the street and providing organic food for luscious meals.

Willa Lefever is a prime example of healthy, intelligent action — a joy to talk and work with. She responds enthusiastically to everything making for a "better" life. Having grown up on Harold and Grace Lefever's Sonnewald Homestead (R.R. 1, Spring Grove, Pa.) gardening and soil are in Willa's bones. Under a backyard tree she has three compost heaps in process, from her own and her neighbors' kitchen, garbage and clippings. She grows wheat for friends; her curb-garden beans, onions, greens and cabbage nourish her family, friends and visitors; she works at a "folk-garment" shop; she took us to a rousing square dance and to the Ann Wigmore-West Health Center (Lemon Grove, Ca.) with its wheatgrass, sprouts diet which heals cancer patients to good health. For Willa we revise an old adage, "You can take the girl out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the girl." Long life to Sonnewald in San Diego!

Kolsbuns — Education via Fun and Table Games

Jann and Ken Kolsbun and their four daughters originated and conduct a high quality, fun-and-education-filled cottage industry of cooperative table games. In their attractive games, players assemble around a table to cooperatively (not competitively) share goals to Save the Whales, Unseat Madison Avenue Advertising, Learn Organic Farming. As guest in their home, I enjoyed this creative family, the games, whole food, hours of good discussion, and not least, their newsy, printed catalogue. (It's worth perusing, and may solve your Christmas gift-giving. Address: Box 2002, Santa Barbara, Ca.) Why does laughing benefit health? The Kolsbuns *know health*; they know a healthy thalamus gland keeps our immunity system in shape; that the mouth-cheek muscles are connected with thalamus by direct nerves; that exercising the mouth muscles in smiling-laughing stimulates and strengthens the thalamus, and thus is a direct contribution to good immunity. So play (and work) with laughter, increase your immunity to infection, stay healthy and better direct energy toward that better world. Laugh and improve the world!

Strengthened Friendships

Of course I value the contacts and opportunities provided by my 1983 California trip to promote Anniversary Year School of Living activities, and for increased social 'reform.' But beneath and under all is the prime goal of strengthened friendships. The home of Eleanor Allen in Yucaipa was center for this, to which Fiona Herron came from San Francisco. We have

1. Farewell to Departing Decentralists,
Welcome to Young Leaders - M.J.Loomis \$1.00
2. The Land Question - Shirley Anne Hardy \$1.00
3. Eight Manifestoes for A Better World, M.J.Loomis \$2.50
Marx - Rochdale - Georgist - Libertarian
New Libertarian - Mutualist - Psychologic
4. Steps to Psychological Maturing - Don Werkheiser \$2.50
5. The Community Land Trust for Stabilizing The
Economy - Gretchen Older \$4.00
6. Introduction to Major Problems of Living-100 pages
R. Borsodi, edited by M.J.Loomis \$5.00
7. Progress and Poverty, Henry George, book \$7.50
8. Alternative Americas, Mildred J. Loomis, book \$7.95
9. Back copies of Quarterly Green Revolution
The Possessional Problem Summer 1981 24 pages \$2.00
The Educational Problem December 1981 - 32 pages \$2.50
Guatemala, The Horror & Solution 72 pages \$1.50
Random Issues (our selection) 50¢ each; 3 for \$1.00
10. This Ugly Civilization - book, Porcupine Press, Ed.1972 \$19.50
Ralph Borsodi

School of Living Press, RD 7, Box 388, York, PA 17402

forgotten the number of years we have been close friends. The moment we are together we enjoy our similarities and differences; we share books and gardens; we probe life and death. While they have other centers, both Eleanor and Fiona have shared School of Living practices and principles for decades.

Our 1983 visit was especially poignant. Fiona's discomfort increased from a recurrence of cancer. Why is she ill, we pondered, out of her lifetime of knowledge and practice? Finally we assisted her return home where she could better deal with her needs. We all seek humbly for more insight into both material and non-material areas, for further wisdom and to live with Life and discover its meaning. More surely we echo the poet, "The jewels of one's Life are the friends who adorn it."

On the return flight came a twinge of resentment that this technical bird was increasing the distance from cherished ones. Came a resolve to join California friends to establish or join a School of Living community on the West Coast. We'd like to discuss and plan with any others who are interested. It could be a significant step to Ralph Borsodi's late vision, "I believe we are on the verge of a real post-industrial and decentralist revolution!"

My 1983 California sojourn brings firmer and stronger hopes for the Green Revolution.

Mildred J. Loomis

THE OWNER BUILT HOME REVISITED

by Ken Kern

Introduction:

Our creative resources are not only inexhaustible, they grow every day. As far as we can tell, the frontier of creative scientific knowledge is limitless. So who can doubt that we have the capacity to make the scientific and technological advances required to build our new dream world of fresh air, pure water, and undefiled countryside - while at the same time continuing an orderly economic expansion, including more employment opportunities?

Gerald R. Ford, Spokane, 1976

In compliance with my Scribner editor who admonishes, "Always begin a book on a positive note," I include the above quote from a speech by former President Ford. His words also illustrate to what degree an otherwise reasonable person can be so completely amiss about the state of our national economy. The reality of the situation is that we are now entering an era of diminishing returns, an extended period of international non-growth. The economic facts indicate that the industrialized nations have reached the end of exuberant wastefulness. Consider:

Dwindling of irreplaceable natural resources. Three fourths of the world's energy fuels and mineral deposits continue to be expropriated by one fourth of the world's population. But this Age of Waste is approaching an end as these commodities become depleted and their extraction becomes increasingly expensive.

Environmental pollutants. As the people in developed nations seek more and more material goods and services to quench their ever expanding needs and desires, the atmosphere, vegetation, soil and groundwater all undergo a general degradation. Smokestack, auto and domestic fossil

fuel combustion cause acid rain and an unnatural buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Deforestation causes water shortage on one end, flooding on the other. Exploitive farming practices aggravate flooding while soil erosion continues at an alarming rate.

Basic life support systems threatened. Increased food demands from an ever increasing world community cannot be met by an agriculture having sunlight, air, soil and water problems. High energy costs for fertilizers and fuel, along with increased distribution costs and punitive markets, can only result in widespread famine and malnutrition for millions. Relentless rise of fossil fuel prices affect not only heating and cooling of buildings, but transport of all goods and services as well.

Social disamenities. The trend in world-wide urbanization continues, leading to congestion and sprawl. To counter or correct the ensuing hazards, prices will increase along with taxes. There will be less profit and a lower rate of expansion for business. A general breakdown of social service programs will occur, with a piling up of garbage in the streets, police and political corruption common, sewage systems breaking down, increases in street crime, drug abuse and delinquency.

Ken Kern, Oakhurst Cal., is a life-time School of Living member, an expert builder but not a monist. Green Revolution published his Owner Built Home in 1961, and is delighted to present it now with his quarter century growth in technique, social, economic, political and psychological wisdom. -M.J.L.

Individual stress. An increase in the pace of life required for personal survival will lead to more personal and family ill health. Scarcity, unemployment and inflation will fuel a general state of political unrest, hunger and forced migration. Families will scatter. The accumulation of environmental hazards, which honor no national boundaries, may threaten the entire human species.

In this scenario of both current and probable events I should also include, perhaps the ultimate expression of the Age of Waste: nuclear annihilation. And even if that doesn't occur, given the sloth and obstructionistic nature of so-called protective agencies, the only force that may prevent a general decline of our civilization would be one endowed with military or dictatorial powers.

I hasten to remind the reader that this is a book about domestic architecture, not world events. But however little I have to contribute about the design and construction of the self built home, there is a connection. This will become more obvious as I narrow the focus from the wider world picture to the specifics inherent in the economics of U.S. housebuilding. If this home (or any) building process is implemented without the foresight of future possibilities, the creation will live on to haunt the endeavor and frustrate its user for a long time to come: we transform our habitat and it, in turn, transforms us.

None of the issues I now raise about environmental degradation were mentioned in the first release of *The Owner Built Home*. It was first published in 1960, long before the word "ecology" had any meaning or relevance. Even the concept of owner-builder was unique to my book. It had not yet appeared in print. The 60's and 70's were eventful years, both for the economy in general and for the home-builder in particular. They were boom times. But now in the 80's an economic plateau is established and productivity seems to have only one direction to go - down. With higher prices being asked for dearer materials and energy resources, it is quite natural that the inflationary spiral continue to be aggravated. We have already witnessed how the results of this economic muddle have stymied home building. A closer examination is warranted.

The market value of a house depends mostly on the cost of materials and labor. Interestingly, both labor productivity and material resource availability rose dramatically throughout the 60's and peaked in the 70's. A growth curve can be used to illustrate the combined rise and peak. The 70's witnessed the most prolific housing boom of all time. Nearly twenty million units were constructed in that decade. It was also the period of the greatest amount of disposable personal income (a gauge of the standard of living), even when adjusted for inflation. The graph takes the form of a rapid rise, peaking out, and leveling off (see figure 0.1).

If you plot the expansion of the money supply against the availability of goods and services, a so-called consumer price (or cost of living) index is determined. This graph line, however, never reaches a plateau point. Inflation continues. This continued peaking is purposeful, as it is to the government's advantage to maintain a high inflation rate. That is, the soon-to-be trillion dollar national debt turns out to be less of a real outlay when paid off in inflated dollars. In a growing economy people can readily accept inflation because their salaries rise correspondingly. But when the amount of disposable income levels off while inflation continues upward, the economy suffers.

U.S. budgetary deficits, which contribute directly to the so-called national debt, continue to rise roughly commensurate with inflation. A high debt contributes to inflation because the Feds have to print more money and issue more bonds or securities, which, because of their sheer numbers, have to be covered with cheaper and cheaper dollars. The growth of the money supply has risen steadily

since 1960 but, like inflation and the national debt, is not expected to level off until the middle 80's, if by then.

This swell of inflation, deficit and money supply which was once tolerable ceased being so in 1975 when the manufacturing productivity of this country went into a no-growth mode. It has been this halting of productivity that has made the most substantial impact on the homebuilding industry. Growth in individual productivity is the pivotal point of the capitalist economy and is, too, the single most important factor in the design, material choices, and general character of home in the 80's. This becomes especially apparent when you realize that a no-growth productivity is a direct result of some of the larger issues mentioned at the outset. For instance, the dwindling of irreplaceable natural resources and proliferation of pollutants both tend to divert massive amounts of this country's productive energy into cleanup and maintenance rather than new enterprises. We have to comply with such institutions as the Environmental Protection Agency, which tends to cream off abnormally high proportions of capital through its mandates (especially in the area of municipal wastes) and, then, to achieve rather dubious results. And, typical of bureaucratic regulations, legal injunctions too often contribute to the problem, not the solution. This is so much the case in housing that an entire chapter of this book is devoted to that single subject.

Immediately after World War II there was a world wide push to improve people's housing. Tremendous strides were made in materials, design, tools and methods employed in low cost home construction. In *The Owner Built Home* I attempted to document and evaluate the more significant output of this work. As the field was lucrative for new concepts, my book gained a distinctive reputation as an idea book. It was probably this element that contributed most to its quarter-million readership. But, like the other development curves in our society, building innovations also peaked out in the 70's and have not grown since. As a matter of fact, in many instances home building has actually regressed to archaic patterns of former, pre-technological eras. This phenomena is of sufficient interest and value to warrant a separate chapter in this present work because it parallels the general decline of research and development in every facet of our society (except the military). So, rather than present a freshly assembled potpourri of new ideas, this edition, while pointing out what techniques are retrogressive in nature, focuses on field-tested innovations of the previous two decades. It is, in a way, *The Owner Built Home*, but with the exotica weeded out in favor of describing those methods which have proven the simplest and cheapest.

Another distinct difference between the two books is that the present volume is addressed to a world audience and not exclusively to North Americans. Planetary defilement has been caused by the relentless greed and ethnocentric arrogance of a small portion of its inhabitants. We in the affluent West have not been properly instructed in the fine art of living within the carrying capacity of our area of the planet without forcing constant resource exploitation. We have yet to develop a world view about the sustainable yield rates of renewable resources. And, in the process of overshooting environmental limits, we have assaulted the whole human habitat and its capacity to support any form of life on earth. The long term results of this "me first" attitude may result in the annihilation of our species. The short term results are an ever-widening inequality in human welfare between the so-called developed and less developed countries. My position in this matter is simply this: if the proposed building systems are not applicable in some form to all people, everywhere, and at all times, they are failures as shelter solutions and should be redesigned. I say this because people's basic life needs, like

food and shelter, are not that diverse. The criteria I use to evaluate a building method are also basic: is it healthy, affordable, and is the end result good looking? There are minimum living requirements for all humans the world over and it disturbs me as much to see affluent Americans wallowing in their wasted space as it does to know there are shelter-needy families living in cardboard shanties. As I view it, the most critical area of concern — and one demanding our concerted energies to resolve — is the narrowing of the gap between the haves and the world's have-nots. Whether they are African craftsmen building their homes from the ground up, or European farmers retrofitting their homes for more comfort in an age of scarcity, owner-builders have goals and motivations in common. All are dissatisfied with the choices of housing available to them. Not only is the cost of buying or renting too great, the housing itself seems designed more for the convenience of the construction industry than the long term comfort and use of its occupants.

The question as to why people become owner-builders, eschewing the prebuilt "product," is only partly answered by those dissatisfactions, though. Many build for themselves for the gratification they anticipate in designing and building their own place. They imagine being able to have a house of any shape they want, designing it to meet their most practical needs but, also, their most whimsical fancies. They wonder what it would be like to be an artist-house-builder in the only true sense — in a way that architects, who merely interpret clients' visions, and builders, who are allowed no visions at all, can't. What would it be like to make and correct mistakes with their own hands, free of that high priced workman? What would it be like to touch all the materials, to learn about placing them one against another? These are exciting questions which each person can answer only by proceeding with the design and construction of a home. They are also questions that must be tempered by realistic considerations.

In the original *Owner Built Home* I listed seven axioms as guidelines for the owner-builder experience. They are as universally pertinent today as they were twenty years ago, even in their order of importance.

1. Pay as you go. Most owner builders have never previously owned a home, nor have they ever possessed the means to buy one in the conventional way. The frustration of paying rent is what prompts most of these people to begin thinking about owning their own houses. But the thought of being tied down to regular house payments spanning a period of 20 to 30 years is often equally distasteful. For most people this is the only other option.

2. Supply your own labor. Production efficiency is less and union or contracted labor is substantially higher than it was 20 years ago. By keeping the project simple in design, there is no part of it that can't be built by inexperienced labor.

3. Build according to your own best judgement. The issue here is to dispense with building code regulations. This is far more difficult to accomplish nowadays, short of locating beyond their jurisdiction. Try, first, to locate beyond their jurisdiction.

4. Use native materials. Today we would call native materials "site generated" or "renewable." Even if your specific site can't yield everything necessary to build, chances are good that basic materials like stone aggregates or lumber are produced somewhere nearby. The point here is that there's no reason, for example, for every new house in America to contain lumber from the Pacific Northwest or Georgia.

5. Design and plan your own home. When an owner-builder is able to fully grasp the design implications and limitations of the building site and, at the same time, have clear understanding of family space requirements, building design tends to fall into place naturally.

6. Use minimum but quality grade hand tools. If the house design is kept simple, and the work program well organized, inexpensive hand tools will suffice for all phases of the construction.

7. Assume responsibility for your building construction. Once people realize how little is involved in implementing construction plans, they will realize that the contractor is the least indispensable person on any home building project.

All of these axioms — and more — will receive thorough coverage in the present volume. In the pages that follow, I will document the design and construction of a house that meets the demands of our capital and resource limited economy. It is a basic design for those of us who have reluctantly discarded the idea of continued growth of our weekly paychecks based on progress of human-exclusive technology. We are no longer living on the uphill economic slope of the 60's and 70's. And now, in the 80's, we experience life on the downhill slope. The houses we build today will make little sense to those of us yet unable to adjust to this unfamiliar condition: they are preoccupied in their bewilderment and anguish with the turnaround itself. Many will feel cheated, but others of us will accept the challenge and prepare, in this autumn of the 80's, for the winter ahead.

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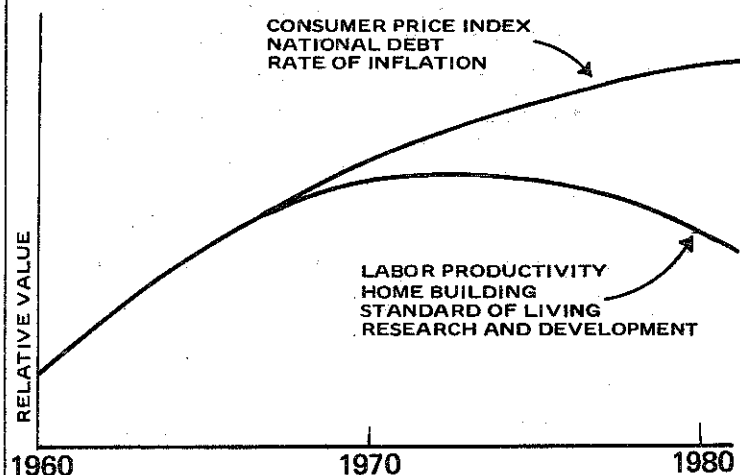


FIG. 1 GROWTH CURVES

1983» 50TH ANNIVERSARY of FLIGHT FROM THE CITY by RALPH BORSODI & his 100TH BIRTHDAY « 1983



BEYOND THE FREEZE

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THE GREEN ALTERNATIVE

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By Murray Bookchin

Will the peace movement freeze into "nuclear freeze" and disarmament issues?

Or will it go beyond a single-issue protest movement to become a broadly educational one – a movement that confronts the vast problem of growing American militarism with its sinister implications for our democracy, our rights as individuals to control our own lives, the integrity of our environment, and our need to achieve sweeping social change?

Already the German "Greens" have broadened their opposition to nuclear power plants and missile deployment to include problems of sexism, centralization of power, restrictions on alternative lifestyles and on community self-management. It may well be that their movement will lend itself to internal splits as a result of factions which place a strong emphasis on parliamentary politics and the manipulative mentality such a politics produces. But there is nothing wrong with agreeing to disagree and then tolerantly separating into different organizations with different goals and methods. Variety, we like to say, is the spice of life – not a New Age homogeneity that fears confrontation when it's direly needed.

What the German Greens have done for us, however, is not to enter the German parliament. They have shown us how to raise and *broaden* the real issues of peace. They have turned these issues into questions of social reconstruction, not only social protest. They have offered alternatives to the ills of our times, not merely lamented them.

And perhaps most importantly: they have linked armaments, ecology, sexism, lifestyle, community, direct action, and decentralization into an increasingly coherent and well-focused program – a comprehensive outlook for Germans that Europeans, and hopefully Americans, will emulate, modify, debate, or complete. Whether they win or lose this endeavor is not the problem I wish to raise. What counts is that they are trying, whatever their odds, to open a new way out of a stalemate – indeed, escape from the

tunnel vision – that marks so many protest movements today.

They have worked at defining their *own* agenda for Germany, not merely reacting to the CIA or KGB's agendas. They have tried to break out of the phony chess-game we call the Cold War in which generals, politicians, industrialists, and bureaucrats set up the pieces on the board, establish the rules of the game, and then have the gall to ask us to "bear" them in a contest of their own choosing.

The American peace movement has yet to reach this crucial level of action and alternative thinking. We tend to respond to what "they" do up there rather than exercise our own initiative in formulating coherent and unified views as a solution for our problems. We are good at raising such issues as the nuclear freeze, reduction in armaments, opposition to relocation plans, and peace budgets – all of which are immensely needed. But they still do not constitute a real agenda for America. Will a nuclear freeze diminish the ability of the superpowers to wipe out the world even with a fraction of the weapons that remain in their swollen arsenals? Will arms reduction totally eliminate a weaponry that can annihilate countless millions with even conventional bombs? Will a peace budget deal with the way our needful goods are equitably distributed, not merely produced, or lead to the institutional changes we require to achieve such a laudable goal?

All the fragments that make up this complex social puzzle have to be pieced together; single issues do not have to be abandoned. We need more programmatic thinking and theorizing, not only more action.

Consider how peace issues interlock with ecological issues. It is the domination of human by human as it is ultimately expressed in war, weaponry, and the Patton-image of the combative male that gave rise to the very notion of dominating nature. From the age of Homer's *Iliad* and the bronze-age warrior to the present, the war against nature in the form of resource-exploitation and lust for control of the entire living world has had its origins in the war of human

beings against each other. On the other hand, the abolition of the war against nature with its all-consuming fever of domination has its roots in a sensibility of peace – of peace between humanity and nature that derives from peace between human and human. Ecology and peace are united by the grammar, vocabulary and sensibility of a respect for life as a whole, be it life in human society or in the more general web of life we call the biosphere.

Consider, too, how ecological issues interlock with feminist issues. From time immemorial, woman has been the symbol of nature revered and later, in patriarchal society, of nature degraded. The attempt to curb her rich spontaneity and to "manage" her fecundity as the bearer of children expresses in the most personal terms the domineering male's appetite to subdue the life forms of our planet. In the subjugation of woman, he daily affronts her very being as the symbol of nature, just as his affront of nature expresses his violation of woman's identity and integrity.

Not accidentally, women have now taken increasing custody of ecological and peace issues in the form of eco-feminism and the opposition to missile-siting. The English women who stood vigil at the American military base at Greenham Common are the exact counterpart to their American sisters in Women for Life on Earth who ringed the Pentagon in protest against Washington's rearmament policies and the women who will participate at the Seneca Falls Peace Encampment in July. For the women of both countries, it is not only war in its military sense that has to be eliminated but war in its ecological sense.

Finally, consider how our existence as a democracy and the libertarian traditions spawned by the American Revolution overarch this broad constellation of problems, including the freedom of our communities and the empowerment of our citizenry. Bereft of our liberties, we become voiceless and passive – the debased conscripts of an all-encompassing military machine. No less than our freedom to express our views and act upon them, we must seek to perpetuate the institutions that guarantee these

rights – the forms of freedom such as town meetings, the electoral accountability of public officials to the people, and the various constitutional means we use to alter public policy.

Germany's Greens have their origins primarily in battles waged by counter-cultural people around nuclear reactors, the Frankfurt Airport's plan to extend a landing strip into one of the area's last pine forests, the occupation of old buildings by squatters, the impact of an all-pervasive feminist movement, and only later, the Pentagon's attempt to site Pershing and cruise missiles on German soil.

We have not reached this broad, unified, and increasingly coherent level of social concerns. We are too focused on trying to deal with each issue as though it can be separated from the others which loom over us. We suffer from a bad American habit of "setting priorities" rather than establishing connections in a coherent and programmatic way. The attempt to extend our democratic liberties is a striking example of a problem that can be narrowed to a "single issue" with its own "network" and "constituency" – or can be broadened to the proportions it deserves so that it becomes the cement for uniting all the other issues into the historic problem of public empowerment and grassroots control of our social destiny. We can deal with it as a matter of "civil rights" and lock it into exhausting court battles or election campaigns. Or we can deal with it as a matter of human rights that concerns the fate of our republican Constitution and our basic liberties as a free people.

The Coming Crisis

With a vast technological revolution in the offing, based on dazzling advances in cybernetics and robotics, our country is faced with long-range unemployment on a massive scale, social unrest, and ultimately, a concerted effort to regiment our country by diminishing its liberties and rights.

This is no idle problem. It overshadows everything we will do in the decades ahead – that is, short of nuclear war or ecological catastrophe. Indeed, our very power to prevent war and ecological breakdown will grimly depend on our ability to preserve these very liberties and rights so painfully gained over past generations...

The industrial, military, and political elites that manage America know this only too well. They are burdened by our traditional, semi-agrarian republican Con-

stitution which continually entangles them in obstacles that guard the public interest. Limited as we may think our freedoms may be, they are too numerous and compelling to enable the elites to manage a society in which millions will have no home in a robotic economy, no stake in a cybernetic technology, and no hope in an increasingly centralized and bureaucratized political structure.

The Establishment, you can be sure, has no "tunnel vision." Nationally, it is giving more power to the FBI and CIA, training "special forces" for domestic as well as foreign control, sophisticating its surveillance technology, closing off information to the public, and trying to meld the legislative and judicial branches of the government into an increasingly imperial executive.

The entire Bill of Rights is under seige. Ultimately, these powers will have to militarize the entire country on a scale that will make futuramas like *Blade Runner* seem picayune. The trick they use is not to overhaul the Republic in one fell swoop. They pare it away piecemeal by extending executive terms of office (a six-year presidency is currently being floated in Washington and a four-year governorship in Montpelier), by substituting bureaucratic and professional agencies for local citizen organizations, by enlarging centralized governmental functions at the expense of city and town functions. All of this, to be sure, is done in the name of "efficiency," "cost-reduction," and "expertise."

This is the Army way. It is militarism in politics, economics, and daily life as it is militarism in schools, when the ROTC plants its noxious roots. Seen in this broad light, the peace movement is fighting the larger issue of a militarized society, not only a monopoly of violence by state agencies and their armed forces. It is fighting the regimentation of people in every walk of life, not merely the conscription of our young people. It is fighting a suffocating sensibility that sees nature as mere "resources," not only people as cannon fodder. It is fighting "generals" at every level of society.

Vermont, perhaps more so than any part of our country, may enjoy the unique ability to initiate an American Green movement, just as it initiated the freeze issue nationally. We have the rich democratic traditions, the human scale, and perhaps, the "critical mass" of activists, so marvelously networked, to pull it off for the nation at large.

Can we combine our disparate networks – the peace, ecological, feminist, communal, health, educational, and cooperative – into a common interlinking coalition to provide a working example of what it means to literally "Green America," to use Charles Reich's uniquely relevant phrase for the last Sixties? Can we put aside careerist ambitions, personality frictions, dogmatic disputes, Thirties and Sixties-type Cold War politics, Third World posturing and verbiage? Can we create the beginnings of a decentralized but interlocked coalition – yes, a Green Coalition – that will avoid top-down party structures and parliamentary fiascos to win our communities to the ideal of a new libertarian populism?

Such a libertarian populist movement may never shake our Green Mountains but it may eventually bring our neighbors into a confederation of towns and cities – a new, grassroots local power – that will be the conscience and example for similar confederations elsewhere in the country. We do not need any new political parties to raise this standard of civic confederation. The institutions for doing this are very much in place, notably our town meetings and neighborhood assemblies. What we desperately need is to create the broader linkages and agendas that will impact on our state as a whole through its communities, not its summits in Montpelier.

Above all, we have to back out of the tunnels that separate us and open our eyes to a broader vista of social change. It's time to realize that people who love liberty are people who love peace, and people who love peace are people who love a healthy environment and fecund nature.¹

Green Revolution

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EDITORS

George Yamada Mildred Loomis

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