Renewal

"There is no easy formula for this renewal." — Lewis Mumford

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In the nation, around the world

Hatfield; Sandinistas at the Crossroads; Beyond Nationalization

No U.S. Senator or Representative is an acknowledged spokesperson for the "transformational movement." But if you read their speeches and follow their newsletters, you'll find that a number of them are beginning to "float" transformational ideas.

In two recent speeches, one to the National League of Cities, the other to the Massachusetts Governor's Conference on Family and Children, Oregon Republican Senator Mark Hatfield comes closer than any national politician to expressing a perspective that is at once human growth-oriented, decentralist, and globally responsible. Here is what he told the powerful League of Cities:

"I dream of brothers and sisters who care deeply, who share the joys and sorrows of one another, and who meet physical, emotional, and spiritual needs at the home town level. I dream of groups of committed people that live more simply so that others may simply live. I dream of a new movement of those who demand justice for the poor and the sick and imprisoned and dispossessed, beginning with self-involvement at the community level. I dream of a political movement of people that transcends party lines and moves us toward pro-life concerns in the broadest sense of the word which results in nuclear disarmament, returning the resources to the community. . . ."

* * *

Nicaragua's revolutionary Sandinista government has been lauded by the U.S. peace movement, condemned by the Reagan administration. Is it really as "good" or as "bad" as its defenders and detractors would have us believe?

Not yet, says U.S. political activist Irving Weinstein, who feels we have an "unhappy and difficult responsibility: telling the Sandinistas that their conception of a 'vanguard' role (for themselves) is almost certain to lead them into a Stalinist-type dictatorship."

In the Jan. 13 issue of *In These Times*, Weinstein examines the Sandinistas' basic programmatic statement, "Sandinism Is Not Democratism," and finds that it is "permeated with the rejection of 'bourgeois' democracy and the acceptance of Leninist vanguardism." He says the statement serves as "a powerful sanctification of the rule of a messianic elite."

Concretely, these attitudes surface in, for example, the on-again, off-again suspension of the leading opposition newspaper, *La Prensa*, and the widely-acknowledged campaign of systematic violence against Indians who have resisted incorporation into the revolution.

Weinstein believes the Sandinistas are engaged in a dangerous balancing act. "There is in effect a Sandinista 'directorate,' with almost complete control of the machinery of state and the mass organizations. At the same time, there is an attempt to share power by incorporating minority representation into the *pro tem* national legislature. . . . The Sandinistas have been able to get the agreement of the other parties to this arrangement through intense pressure and the promise of an election by 1985. . . . (However,) what puts the question mark on 1985 is the self-definition of the Sandinistas as the vanguard of the revolution. If the restriction (on democracy) is imposed by a 'vanguard' claiming the right to do so by virtue of its representing the 'true' historic interests of the people, why should this cease in 1985?"

Weinstein's conclusion — unlike the peace movement's or Reagan's — is that the nature of the Sandinista government is still very much up in the air. A choice must be made — soon — between "a one-party state or some variant — albeit uniquely Nicaraguan — of political democracy. (It is) utopian for the Sandinistas to believe they will be able to avoid this choice."

* * *

An article stressing "transformational" themes is being widely discussed among politicians, civil servants, and political activists in Washington, D.C.

Jonathan Schell's "The Fate of the Earth," serialized in *The New Yorker* (Feb. 1, 8 and 15), is a powerful attempt to break through our "psychic numbing" and force us to think about the meaning of nuclear war. Part I delineates (in calm, measured tones) the possible consequences of a nuclear holocaust; Part II explores the emotional and spiritual consequences of the fact that we are facing not only our own death but the death of all future generations — the end of human life; Part III urges on us "a common political endeavor, reaching across national boundaries (basically, eliminating nuclear weapons and creating a workable system of world order).

* * *

The recent Malaysian takeover of the British-based company Guthrie has captured the imagination of many Third World decision-makers, according to Third World journalist Andres Federman.

Guthrie was not nationalized. Rather, Guthrie was "taken over" via the stock exchange.

Guthrie owns 190,000 acres of rubber plantations in Malaysia (which is the world's largest rubber producer). Relations between the Guthrie board of directors and Malaysia's national economic board (PNB) had come under increasing strain. When the current slump on the rubber market brought down Guthrie shares on the London Stock Exchange, the Malaysian government simply went in and purchased a controlling interest in the company.

If nationalization and "multinationalization" represent characteristic political remedies of the left and right, then stock market takeovers may represent one "transformation-oriented" alternative to both. Here is the reasoning of Third World advocates of stock market takeovers (according to Federman):

First, stock market takeovers avoid the management problems associated with nationalization. By buying Guthrie out, the PNB inherited Guthrie's management expertise and necessary personnel, both within and outside Malaysia.

Second, stock market takeovers are likely to create fewer political ripples in the West. If nationalization is forced — without compensation — the transnational corporations affected would have enough clout to cause serious problems (as in Allende's Chile). Even when compensation is given, the prospect of satisfying both parties is remote. But a takeover in a western stock exchange plays by the rules.

Third, the cost of taking over a western company may be less then it appears. With the current recession in the West and the slump in commodities, the share prices of a number of corporations dealing in natural resources are heavily undervalued. Since most of these companies are in the Third World, there is room for intergovernmental partnerships to ease the financial burden.

Takeovers are complicated legal affairs. Faced with a takeover, a company's board of directors is likely to resist. It might appeal to the existing shareholders not to sell their stock to the bidder, or it may raise legal objections. In the U.S., several takeovers have been frustrated in this way. It is likely, however, that the Reagan administration, with its commitment to the "marketplace," will relax existing regulations. If it does, and if such relaxation extends to foreign interests, it will be doing the Third World a great service.

Kaleidoscope

Spring conferences; Universal Unity /Planetary Initiative update

Two unusually stimulating conferences will be held this spring on New Age political themes.

On April 15-18, near Charlottesville, Va., the Sevenoaks Pathwork Center will host a conference, "Living in Harmony - Growing with Change," **Hazel Henderson** will be the keynote speaker. "There will be workshops on both personal transformation and social transformation," Sevenoaks director **Kay McNett** told RENEWAL, "(and) we will create a fully integrated experience of being in community" (Sevenoaks: Rte. 1, Box 86, Madison, Va. 22727).

On April 24-25, near Los Angeles, the Center of Feminist Therapy will sponsor a women-only conference, "Women: The Leading Edge of the New Age." Keynote speaker will be **Charlene Spretnak**, editor of *The Politics of Women's Spirituality* (see RENEWAL #19). "There will be over 60 workshops on a variety of systems of spirituality and healing," conference producer **Linda Barone** told RENEWAL (Center: 12581 Venice Blvd., Ste. 206, L.A. 90066).

* * *

The Foundation of Universal Unity, founded last year to foster "unity and oneness" in social and political life, reports 73 **local and regional coordinators** in the U.S. and abroad. The Foundation's traveller-organizers, **George and Joelle Emery** and **Peggy Ellering**, have produced an upbeat report on their organizing efforts across the U.S. and in eight other countries (Box 531, Ft. Collins, Colo. 80522). . . . The Planetary Initiative for the World We Choose, also founded last year, reports 68 **"local facilitators and contacts"** in the U.S. and abroad. Since Jan. 1 it has held its inaugural press conference (at the prestigious Rosenhaus Center for Human Rights in New York); published its first "network newspaper," *The Initiator*; and published a useful organizing manual with a step-by-step "local campaign game plan" (c/o Planetary Citizens, 777 U.N. Plaza, N.Y. 10017).

* * *

Some of the most innovative papers on "transformational" politics are deliberately *not* published in books or magazines, but pass from hand to hand. Two current examples: **Robert Swann**, president of the E.F. Schumacher Society, is circulating "Community Survival in an Age of Inflation," which describes "a local money system (that could) work for development of the local community" (Box 76A, R.D. 3, Gt. Barrington, Mass. 01230; $1.50). And **Byron Kennard**, environmental official in the Johnson administration, is circulating a 72-page think-piece, "Not Far Out But Far In," whose purpose is to show that decentralism can be a winning political strategy for the Democrats in the 80's (2430 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Ste. 823, D.C. 20037; $6).

* * *

The one-year-old American Holistic Nurses' Association (AHNA) and the three-year-old American Holistic Medical Association (AHMA) have just passed, between them, the 1,000-member mark.

"(These numbers are) impressive," says **Charlotte McGuire**, founding president of AHNA, "but the quantity of members is not as impressive as its quality. All of us on the AHNA Board have been keenly impressed with the quality of the nurses who have joined us" (Box 116, Telluride, Colo. 81435).

"We can see from our office the change in climate toward holistic practitioners at a grassroots level," adds **Jean Ann Caywood**, executive director of AHMA. "We are now receiving 40-50 requests a week for names of holistic physicians" (AHMA, 6932 Little River Tpk., Annandale, Va. 22003).

* * *

Lynchburg, Va., is best known as the home town of the Moral Majority, but there's a significant "transformational" presence there too, and it's being coaxed out of the woodwork by the 52-year-old director of Lynchburg's Wholistic Resource Center, **Ellyn Hartzler Cowels**.

"We are trying to ameliorate (the Moral Majority's energies)," Cowels told RENEWAL. "We are very consciously trying to develop a whole series of (alternatives) — dream groups, holistic health workshops, management consulting, personal counseling, mime. A whole bunch of people from the churches here are involved, and a whole bunch of people not in the churches; men and women; blacks and whites . . ." (Cowels: P.O. Box 32, Lynchburg, Va. 24505).

Turning points

Lehrfeld learns: in the larger world, it helps to be a lawyer

By Betsy Lehrfeld as told to M.S.

(Lehrfeld, 36, is an Oakland, Cal. lawyer and a Governing Council member of the New World Alliance.)

I grew up in Palm Springs, California. I spent a lot of time by myself; I read vociferously. When I was in grade school I was upset about being a girl. I didn't think there was any percentage in it. I still find if you want to accomplish something in the larger world it does not help you to be a woman.

In high school my friend and I told our civics teacher we were going to miss school one day to attend a demonstration. We were told if we weren't in school that day he would flunk us and personally see to it that we did not graduate with our class. We did not go to the demonstration — fortunately, for other reasons — but from this I learned a lot about the way the world works.

I attended five different universities, including U.C.-Berkeley, which I left just before the first free speech demonstrations. In 1966 and 1967 I lived in San Francisco half a block from the corner of Haight and Ashbury; I joined the original S.F. Mime Troupe. I graduated from San Francisco State in '67 with a BA in English literature.

After a variety of jobs and adventures I began to work for the Council on Economic Priorities, a corporate social responsibility research group, directing its west coast office and marketing its reports. This gave me an opportunity to talk about policy with many corporate executives. This revealed to me that our world is shaped by decisions in the economic sphere as much if not more than in the political sphere; and that most of these decisions are made by decent individuals largely motivated by loyalty to family and employers.

In 1974 I went to law school at U.C.-Berkeley. I wanted to engage in "public interest" work in a more independent fashion, and I wanted to leverage my personal impact. I find that if you want to accomplish something in the larger world it *does* help you to be a lawyer.

I started my own law practice in Mendocino County. I was hoping at the time that some real experiments in new social and economic forms were being tried there. It soone became clear, however, that the problems of the larger society were not so easily escaped, and the economic demands of the larger society were so pervasive that people didn't have the space to do much besides struggle to survive.

I now work out of Oakland, Cal. and Washington, D.C. I am focusing increasingly on advising non-profit, "new paradigm" organizations with respect to both tax status and ways of developing marketplace expressions of their goals — ways of becoming self-supporting. It's one thing for a foundation-funded, non-profit group to say, for example, "These people doing clear-cut logging are doing bad things!" It's quite another for a group to say, "Hi! We're the Green Leaves Company, a team of 10 people who know how to restore and manage forests. We'd like to tell you what your forest needs and bid on the work." I believe that second kind of approach will in the long run give us better forests, happier people, and a sounder economy.

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Bookends

History and spirit; women; war and renewable energy

The first volume of Vincent Harding's history of the "active black struggle for freedom and justice" in America, *There Is a River* (Harcourt Brace, $20), has just come out, and it is not only the first "transformation-oriented" history of blacks in America, it is one of the first transformational history books period.

First, though it is "analytical" enough to satisfy the critical reader, it is celebrative, almost spiritual in tone; as Harvard theologian Harvey Cox puts it, "Harding has invented a new genre, combining the skills of the scholarly historian with the voice of the soul."

Second, though it by no means seeks to downplay black people's suffering, Harding is above all concerned with seeking out "the positive vision of truth and justice" that caused blacks to withstand the terrible negative forces: "How in the midst of such death and suffering could we find so much strength to love, so much determination to live, fight on, and be free?"

Third, Harding consciously emphasizes "the role of religion and spirituality in our freedom struggle." He has become dissatisfied, he tells us, with any analysis which points only to "racism and capitalism at work in the world," and feels there can be no hope for a truly just society "until we address the issue of the human spirit and its role in our struggles for political transformation."

* * *

The Spring/Summer 1981 *Alternative Futures* is a special book-length issue, "Women and the Future" (Human Dimensions Center, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, N.Y. 12181, $6). It's full of articles linking — and significantly advancing — feminism, futurism, and transformational politics. I especially appreciated Lee Khanna's survey of the new feminist utopian novels and Patricia Mische's attempt to delineate a specifically "feminine" model of world order.

* * *

Typically, arguments on behalf of renewable energy have focused on economic and lifestyle issues. In *Energy, Vulnerability, and War* (Norton, $13), energy activists Wilson Clark and Jake Page develop a new argument that might be the most persuasive of all in an America deeply concerned about the "Soviet nuclear threat." It is a frankly military argument.

According to the authors, our increasing reliance on imported strategic materials and energy sources, coupled with the centralized nature of our high-energy technological society, have combined to create "a precarious sense of national vulnerability." We might even be *inviting* enemy attack in that "we stick out to our adversaries a reachable chin, in the form of a small array of big and important targets." Consequently, decentralized, renewable energy could make us more "secure."

Energy, Vulnerability, and War raises some important ethical issues for New Age activists. Clark and Page — who know better — speak frequently and glibly of "us" and "enemies," and they have kind words for "small" nuclear power plants. How far should we be willing to compromise our beliefs in order to win a hearing from a broad-based audience?

Wolfe: rise and decline of "growth politics"

Why is our society dominated by pursuit of economic growth? Fritjof Capra (review, below) says uncontrolled economic growth is a function of our unbalanced, aggressively "yang" culture. Alan Wolfe, professor of sociology at Queens College, offers a different — albeit complementary — explanation in his new book, *America's Impasse: The Rise and Fall of the Politics of Growth* (Pantheon, $16.50). According to Wolfe, in the years following World War II, Republicans and Democrats chose to adopt policies stressing economic growth largely to avoid having to make difficult *political* choices.

In 1946, conservatives were supporters of localism, small businesses, and isolationism, even pacifism. Liberals were supporters of full employment, economic planning, and world order. "Whatever the differences between them," says Wolfe, "the right and left were both *political* options. Either would have required a popular mobilization and the building of new constituences to suport it.... Instead of making a political choice, America opted for an economic surrogate. A bipartisan coalition was formed to pursue economic expansion, at home through growth and overseas through empire."

America's Impasse is a fascinating account of how — and why — this change took place, complete with names, dates, and lots of good detectivelike political narrative. It is also an account of why growth politics is everywhere collapsing today. In a nutshell: we have a political system dependent on economic growth coexisting with an economic system that can no longer provide it (hence the phrase, "America's impasse"). The book is admirably complete, with chapters tracing the rise and fall of growth politics in macroeconomic policy, domestic policy, and foreign policy, and chapters analyzing Carter's and Reagan's presidencies as exercises in the futility of promoting growth politics in an increasingly no-growth world. According to Wolfe, Carter's presidency "proved that a growth-oriented liberalism has no political base without the growth to sustain it."

What is to be done? Wolfe offers a prescription for "a path out of America's impasse" that, ironically, would continue to fan the flames of economic growth: government-guaranteed 40-hour-a-week full employment plus massive public-private investments in new industries. He is on firmer ground when he recommends "growth in community and an expansion of people's capacities," and when he states, "America's impasse will remain until a coalition is able to come to power with a program that puts political vision, and not economic expansion, at the heart of its appeal."

Capra: decline and rise of "balanced values"

Six years ago, Berkeley physicist Fritjof Capra published the enormously popular book *The Tao of Physics*. That book was not explicitly political, but its last page included this statement: "I believe that the world-view implied by modern physics is inconsistent with our present society, which does not reflect the harmonious interrelatedness we observe in nature. To achieve such a state of dynamic balance, a radically different social and economic structure will be needed." Now comes Capra's new book, *The Turning Point* (Simon and Schuster, $17.50), which essentially builds on that statement.

The thesis of *The Turning Point* is that inflation, unemployment, the health crisis, the rising wave of crime, etc., are all different facets of the same crisis — a crisis in perception. "Like the crisis in physics of the 1920's," says Capra, "it derives from the fact that we are trying to apply the concepts of an outdated world view — the mechanistic world view of Cartesian-Newtonian science — to a reality that can no longer be understood in terms of these concepts." To describe the world appropriately we need a perspective much like that of Taoism or "the new physics."

The first part of *The Turning Point* is a brief general critique of Newtonian science and a brief general introduction to the new physics. The second part traces the influence of Cartesian-Newtonian thought in biology, medicine, psychology and economics. The third part presents the emerging new "vision of reality" in each of these fields. The economics chapter, for example, written with Hazel Henderson, is an ambitious attempt to synthesize the ideas of "transformation-oriented" futurists, economists, ecologists, cultural historians, energy consultants and social critics.

Capra feels we're at a "turning point" because we live at a time when three major world-historical transitions are coinciding: we're moving (he says) from patriarchy to androgyny, from fossil fuels to renewable energy, and from materialistic values to hopefully a more balanced set of values. "Balance" is an important word in Capra's book. He rejects Marx's dialectical approach to history in favor of a Taoist approach that sees history as a continuous cyclical fluctuation between "yin" values and "yang" values. His sociopolitical message is that our "strikingly consistent preference for yang values, attitudes, and behavior patterns" (rational knowledge over intuitive wisdom, science over religion, competition over cooperation, and so on) has led to a "dangerous imbalance.... By focusing on the yang and investing it with moral virtue and political power, we have brought about the current sad state of affairs."

In my opinion, not all the comparisons with Marx are favorable to Capra. Marx taught that, within limits, people make their own history. Capra's outlook is more passive: the world *is* changing, the transformation is "now," and our role is to "minimize the hardship of inevitable change." If that is our role, who is in charge of the transformation? Marx taught us to be prepared for struggle; Capra not only tells us that "all struggle in nature takes place within a wider context of cooperation" (all?), he tells us that conflict "should be minimized in times of social transition." But that's often not up to the change agents. On the second-to-last page, Capra looks forward to the time when the social movements of the 60's and 70's will have coalesced into new political parties. If we get that far there will be plenty of conflict.

Vanier Institute takes path-breaking positions on family issues

Suddenly, everyone is coming out in favor of "the family." It has become a major theme in U.S. politics, and as John McKnight, author of *The Mask of Love*, points out, it's the fundamental building block in new political strategies on both the left and right.

Jerry Falwell, president of the right-wing Moral Majority, states, "We are pro-traditional family. We feel that homosexual marriages and common-law marriages should not be accepted as traditional families. We oppose legislation that favors these kinds of 'diverse family forms.' "

Michael Lerner, president of the left-wing Friends of the Family, states, "Family life is indeed in crisis. But this is a function of the organization of corporate capitalist society. . . . A real pro-family coalition, with a strategy for reclaiming family support, (must advocate) full employment, adequate health care, free community controlled child care, a 35-hour workweek with no loss of pay. . . ."

Both the left and the right see the family as embattled for essentially *negative* reasons: "corporate capitalism" or "secular humanism." But there is at least one high-powered group that sees the turmoil in the family as reflecting long-term, deep-seated *positive* trends; that speaks of fostering family "creativity" as distinct from family "stability"; and that counterposes to the agendas of the left and right a "transformational" agenda of its own. That group is the Vanier Institute of the Family in Ottawa, Canada.

Understanding the family

"There are many indications that family life is not 'breaking down' but rather is in a process of transition," Bob Glossop, 34-year-old program officer of the Vanier Institute, told RENEWAL last week (on the eve of his son's first birthday). "Many persons who are profoundly committed to the value of family life are striving to establish new patterns of living that foster familial relationships based on caring, sharing and mutual respect. In (this striving), many have begun to question many of their deeper taken-for-granted assumptions about society."

We asked Glossop how the Vanier Institute hopes to uplevel the stale left-against-right debate on social issues, and he said, "Well, we have begun to react against an excessively structural or formal definition of the family. We need to fashion a language which does not reduce family to the status of a mere physical thing. I think of the family more as a context of meanings; as a place where meanings are engendered, renewed, transformed; as a set of meaningful relationships." The current issue of Vanier's quarterly magazine, *Transition*, contains this passage: "The word family means not only kin — but kinship. Not just distant cousins but also close friends, neighbors and the special people in your life."

Many "pro-family" groups speak of the family as if it were merely a victim of economic or cultural forces and events. However, in a recent letter to the Cultural Policy Review Committee of the Canadian government, the Vanier Institute states: "In our view, culture is (dynamic), created out of the diversity of the daily experiences of a people. Understood that way, we may begin to view the family as an agent of social and cultural change, and not merely as a passive consumer of cultural artifacts." How can the family participate in socio-cultural change? "The route," says Glossop, "is by way of decentralization and devolution of decision-making: not only from national to (state) or regional structures, but more importantly back to immediate localities, back to our homes. This calls for (a lot more personal) responsibility."

Recommendations for change

Vanier's recommendations for economic and political change are just as concrete as Moral Majority's and Friends of the Family's — and light-years more far-reaching. "We were one of the first groups to look at the informal economy," says Glossop (the "informal economy" consists of all the unpaid work that people do: cooking food, caring for children, sharing tools, being a "foster grandparent," etc. - ed.). "Our original reason for this was to undercut those sociologists who say the family has lost all of its functions." More recently, the Institute has become an articulate defender and promoter of the informal economy. According to Glossop, the Institute is now immersed in a debate over whether to recommend "monetizing certain aspects of the informal economy, as a way of making unemployment more palatable," or simply providing a guaranteed income which would allow people to participate more freely in either or both economies.

Other Vanier recommendations differ just as profoundly from the more familiar nostrums of the left and right. "We are wary about (increasing) the centralized authority of the state," Glossop told us. "This concern has made us reluctant to endorse, for example, not day care, but the kind of day care that would reduce our capacity to act autonomously. *Many* so-called 'service needs' cannot be met adequately by more or better organized professionals, as useful as such persons' efforts are, but rather through an increase in the realized capacities of ordinary people to help and support one another."

What makes Vanier run

The Vanier Institute was founded 16 years ago thanks largely to an endowment fund established by the Canadian government. The fund generates an income for Vanier of approx. $500,000 a year. "This endowment is a kind of double-edged sword," says Glossop. "It allows us the freedom to ride through flack (there was a lot of flack in the early 1970's, when we started defending the homosexual family); it allows us to stand back from people's immediate concerns and take a broader look at things. The danger is that you don't want to define yourselves as irrelevant." Over the last couple of years, Vanier has published dozens of papers and pamphlets, and sent speakers to innumerable conferences and workshops all over the world; on the other hand, it has never attempted to really "go to the people" by setting up chapters or discussion groups along the lines of Moral Majority or Friends of the Family. Anyone can join the Institute, Canadian or non-, and try to elect a more activist-minded board of directors (Vanier Institute of the Family: 151 Slater St., Ste. 207, Ottawa, Ont. K1P 5H3, Canada, 613-232-7115; memberships, $5/year; magazine by request).

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