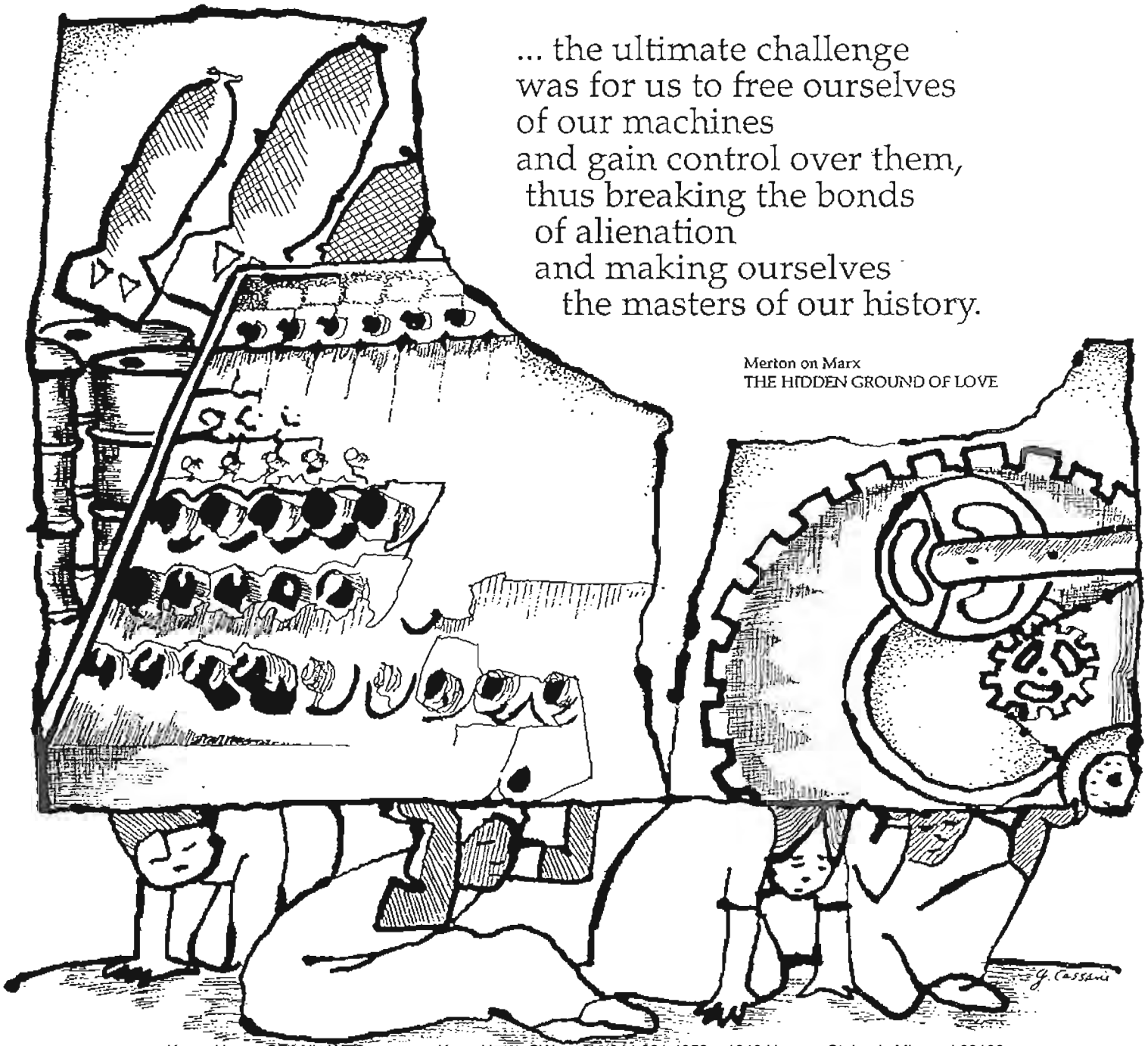
THE Round Table

FALL
1989

"...a path from where we are to where we should be." -- Peter Maurin

ECONOMICS ON A HUMAN SCALE



... the ultimate challenge
was for us to free ourselves
of our machines
and gain control over them,
thus breaking the bonds
of alienation
and making ourselves
the masters of our history.

Merton on Marx
THE HIDDEN GROUND OF LOVE

WHY THIS ISSUE?

"Give us this day our daily bread." The Lord's Prayer gives voice to the simplest and most basic of petitions. Yet we seem compelled to resort to the most extraordinary means to meet the most essential needs. Do our socio-economic institutions effectively provide for our needs, and at what costs?

Visions of bushels of flawless, waxed, lustrous red apples contaminated with Alar; of huge, intricate freeway networks clogged with vehicles traveling at a walking pace every rush hour; of ominous nuclear power plants, erected at enormous public cost, standing idle due to lack of safety and need; these and similar images come to mind. Do we need all this just to have our daily bread?

We live in an age of fundamental frustrations, of confounding contradictions. We produce and store a surplus of grain in towering silos while millions worldwide are malnourished and in our own cities the souplines multiply. Modern medicine offers miracles in the treatment of life-threatening diseases, but we cannot offer adequate primary health care to the uninsured, the poor, the under- and unemployed. We police the world to insure the import of petroleum to fuel our cars, while we suffocate in our smog-polluted cities.

We are free to choose from a stupefying array of manufactured products, most of which serve no real need. At work our role in their production is so reduced, atomized, and controlled that we are robbed of any personal satisfaction in our labor. Human potential is lost when life consists in the passive consumption of commodities and treatments to satisfy manufactured needs.

How do we respond to these paradoxes? Does the solution lie in more advanced technology, in a greater division of labor, in unregulated mega-corporations, in free enterprise, in an expanded governmental role, in socialized industries, more centralization, perhaps in world government?

In this issue we suggest that these trends are not the answer, but lie at the heart of the problem. We do not pretend to have "the solution." Although we cannot provide answers, we will try to propose directions.

Chris Montesano from Sheep Ranch Farm in California begins by reminding us that these issues are not new to the Catholic Worker; Peter Maurin had responded to them at the founding of the movement. Paul Gilk admonishes us not to idealize a primitive past. Rich Wilms, manager of the local Plowsharing Crafts, reports on artisan cooperatives around the world. Virginia Druhe demonstrates how the attempt to include work done by women in economic systems reveals a more human way to understand our economic lives. We also include a brief essay from Bolivia from Sr. Carol Donahue, the usual house articles and a "Round Table Talk" focusing on care of the environment. Finally we felt we must pay tribute to Bolen Carter who recently died, "a pioneer of the Catholic Worker in St. Louis."

The spirituality of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin tends to sober the hubris which humanity is prone to. There are more basic and simpler ways to provide our daily bread — more in harmony with nature and with ourselves. Our socio-economic framework must be challenged at the grass-roots level by the alternatives we pursue. But beyond this a spiritual conversion is needed to heal our economic and social woes. Is it possible to find a more satisfying mode of existence? "Simplify, simplify" warned Thoreau. Readily dismissed as romantic chaff, his was an all-too-prophetic voice. ✝

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COTTAGE INDUSTRIES:

a path from things as they are to things as they should be.

by
Chris Montesano

At the 50th anniversary of the Catholic Worker in New York, I met Joe Zarella who, in his late teens, was with the (early) Catholic Worker in New York. Joe travelled with Peter Maurin on some of his speaking trips. We began discussing the differences between the poor of the 30's and 40's and the poor of the 70's and 80's. Joe said that the marked difference is the numbers of poor that have drug, alcohol or mental health problems. It is clear that a society founded on money, wealth and acquisition has created only a greater breakdown of the human spirit. We now have a situation where generations of poverty have created people who have been robbed of even the skills to know how to work. All of this is coupled with everyone surrounded by massive over-production and consumption of an incredible superfluity of goods. What can we do?

Dorothy Day included in her talks three questions raised by Peter Maurin and other social critics of their day: "Why are things the way they are?", How should things be?", and "How do we make a path from things as they are to things as they should be?" These questions were viewed as the guide post from which social criticism should begin and create social movements with a dyanmic response to the problems of the day. It is the pursuit of these questions that are the basis of an analysis of the two major economic systems of our day: capitalism and communism, and provide an understanding for the need for the creation of a decentralist economy with small shops, intermediate technology and a more agrarian society as the basis of this new economic order.

Peter began his analysis of our present system by tracing the development of capitalism. Mercantile Capitalism came first with the producer selling to a middle-person buying as cheap as possible and selling as high as possible. With the advent of the use of steam, the middle-people created factories and hence the development of factory capitalism. This was followed by Monopoly Capitalism which brought about state intervention to protect the public, to protect the use of raw materials, and to prevent trusts and levy tarrifs. Workers at this time set-up labor unions for self-protection. Finance Capitalism with installment buying was introduced but the abuses of capitalism led to the depression and the state completed its involvement in capitalism by trying to provide employment for the unemployed.

Peter's analysis was equaly as important to the understanding of the emergence of communism. Marx redefined capital as "accumulated labor not for the benefit of the laborers, but for the benefit of the accumulators." This is the basis of class struggle. The purpose of this class was to capture control of the means of production and distribution. Peter viewed this as the use of rugged collectivism to bring about what he called "poverty through force."

The single most important event that affects both capitalism and communism as we know them today is the Industrial Revolution. Peter viewed industrialization as evil because it brings idleness to both the capitalist class and the working class. It separates the notion of work from art, useful from beautiful, and creates unemployment by replacing people with machines.

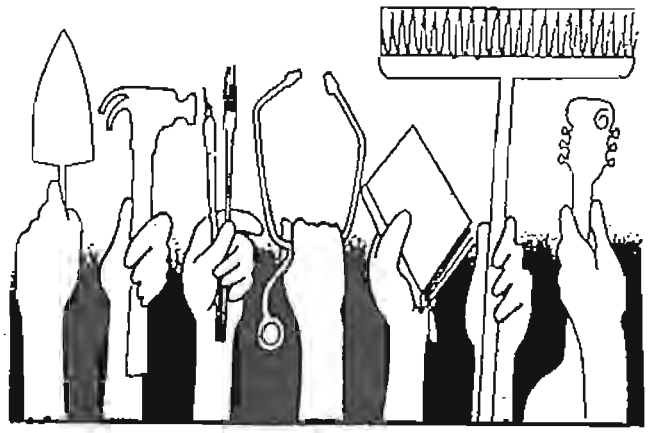
Another important recognition to Peter was understanding how the use of money has affected our society. With the bank account as the standard of values, what is uppermost in the minds of those who control production is to make a profit, not to produce an item that is functional. Politicians end-up maintaining the order of the profit making system. Students are trained in the technique of making a profit and clergy bless the profit-making system. Society is acquisitive, not functional. In an acquisitive society, money is used as an investment to produce more and more goods causing overproduction and overconsumption.

Chris Montesano has been with the Catholic Worker for twenty years, including the last thirteen years with his wife Joan, their family and community at the Catholic Worker Farm in Sheepranch, CA, where Joan and Chris began the community's candle craft eight years ago.

When Peter looked at "How things should be," he redefined labor, economics, government, and society by infusing them with Christian values. The Sermon on the Mount and the example of the life of St. Francis of Assissi were viewed as most applicable to today's problems.

Labor was defined as a gift given for the common good and not a commodity to be bought and sold. This is a very radical definition of labor because, today, labor is most often defined by money. The CW definition of labor flows well with the Gospel admonition to "do good, lend and give without hope of return." There were practical applications as well to not selling labor. When labor or brain power is defined by money, it gives power over us to those who buy and sell labor. It gives them the power to make thousands of people unemployed at the whim of their lust for wealth.

In a Christian economy, money is functional a means of exchange, not a means to make money. Property is used with responsibility and its benefits are shared with those who have less. People choose to do with less so that those who have less will have more. This follows the example of Christ and St. Francis and is poverty through choice.



Peter always quoted Jefferson, "The government that governs least, governs best." The basis of government is decentralism; it is based on people learning how to take personal responsibility for their own lives. As Jesus said in the Gospel, "With pagans those in authority lord it over one another, it is not to be so among you. Whoever is first is to be least and servant of all." Power over others is not a Christian value and the way to remove power over others is for each person to learn how to take power over one's own life.

As people learn how to take power over their own lives they can also learn how to work together with others. This creates a society that is communitarian. Once money has been redefined as a means of exchange, society can become functional rather than acquisitive. In a functional society, there is no longer a need to acquire superfluous goods, so society can begin to return to a more agraian mode rather than an industrial mode.

How then do we make a path from things as they are to things as they should be? Peter left broad general guidelines: a) Clarification of thought to discuss these issues and questions; b) Formation of houses of hospitality to meet the immediate needs of the poor; and c) Farming communities to begin to build a new society in the shell of the old.

In his essays as part of his general program, Peter talks about Self-employment Centers connected with Houses of Hospitality. He viewed these as small shops for repairs and outside work as well as places run by guilds that could teach basic trades. This is one of the more creative aspects of Peter's ideas.

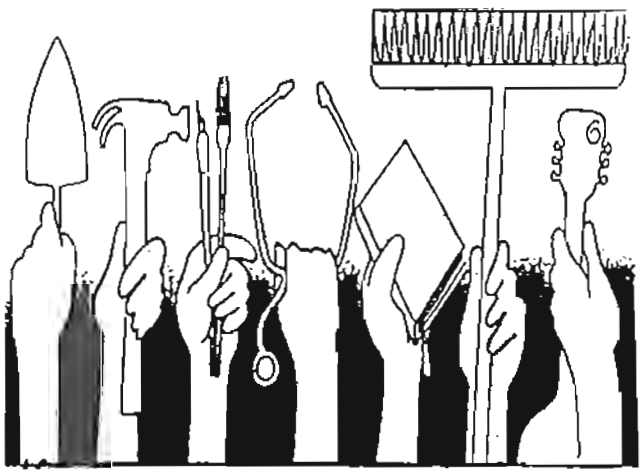
The idea of creating small shops or cottage industries as self-empolyment centers is very appropriate today. Such ventures will fail if they do not take into account the human and spiritual bankruptcy of today. We have come to a point where clarification of thought is not enough. The whole area of feelings and perceptions has been warped and distorted by modern media. We need to discover vehicles that will

help to heal this wound in the human spirit. It is my experience after years in community that it is peoples' feelings and emotions that most often block cooperative living.

I would like to share the path we have found that combines changing things as they are to things as they should be. In our candle craft, no one works for a wage but each person is given what they need. In order to function in the existing legal structure, we have made the business a joint venture. Anyone who lives here for a month or more becomes part of the joint venture. With a joint venture, each member of the venture is responsible to file their own federal income tax. In order not to pay federal war taxes, we remain below the taxable amount by including more people in the joint venture as the business grows. We expect to earn over half our income through our candle craft this year.

In order to function, we rely on people's personal responsibility to do the work. We have different periods of training for different aspects of the craft depending on the individual and the training time required for that skill. When it is necessary, we have bi-monthly business meetings to set production schedules together based on past sales. The tasks are divided up according to people's skills and practical arrangements are made as to who will be in the shop at certain times.

There is no boss and people take responsibility to do what they say. We are entering the third year of operating in this manner and have had no problems getting our candles out in a timely fashion. This may currently work well because our shop is small and there are only four of us working on a regular basis with others plugging in and out on a more short term basis. We have had some problem with working-in short term people and having to reject something that is not done well. That is most often due to not having a long enough training period or not having designed appropriate tools for the task.



By having a craft where the workers are the owners and producers, the tasks that are labor intensive and repetitive can be shared by more than one person. The shared labor becomes a source of creating community.

Our craft is functional in that it fulfills a need for worship. The original intention had been to sell 51% beeswax candles to churches for use on the altar. We had hoped to do this in a local manner, selling to churches in a 150 to 200 mile radius. However, that did not work. We tried going from church to church in three major cities near us and didn't even sell enough to get an adequate exchange for our time! We couldn't compete in price or size variability with the mass-production candle companies. It's taken us six years to come to the point where the craft could provide adequate income. The first three years the craft was supported by other sources, the second three years it helped to pay the land taxes, and only in the last two years has it been able to significantly help support the farm and allow the community to grow.

What we have found important is to find the right market for the craft as well as the right item. Altar candles were a market we couldn't compete in. Candles for celebration, hand-silk-screened, or with flowers hand-arranged and secured on with wax, were. Co-op America, a cooperative that helps market craft items for worker-owned businesses on a national scale was not the right market. Churches and Religious Education Centers were.

I think that it is clear that cottage industries and small shops can be a path to change things from as they are to as they should be. They are especially important in urban areas to help create the new models that we so desperately need. ✝

TOWARD HUMILITY
in LIFE and LEISURE

by
Paul Gilk

A friend of mine, a nurse, has four children and a husband who is a recovering alcoholic. This family used to live a more or less subsistence life here in northern Wisconsin, but now they live closer to town in a larger house with more "conveniences" and they grow less of their own food. My friend recently told me she used to identify with homesteaders and back-to-the-landers, but now she just takes people as they come. She no longer finds special merit or affinity or even likeability with the practitioners of rural self-sufficiency and advocates of decentralization.

A long-time rural partisan myself, I find myself — almost to my own surprise — agreeing with my friend. More than that, I take a lesson from her perspective.

The lesson seems to be a spiritual one. But perhaps it's better to phrase the matter as a question: Is there reason to believe Jefferson's assertion that the tillers of the soil are more virtuous as a group or class than urban people or industrial workers? It probably is true that having a proprietary stake in society, say as a small land-holder, inclines one to a more vigorous concern for one's rights and prerogatives; politically, it could very well result in a rather active participatory democracy. Historically, there are those who see the contraction of democratic promise in this country running hand-in-hand with the squeezing and decline of small-scale farming; and there are those who see the same phenomenon working in the transition from Republic to Empire in ancient Rome.

Well and good. But is this a spiritual issue? I think it is; but the question hinges on whether, or to what extent, our "lifestyle" is an expression of our spiritual depth and humility.

It's possible to say that those who work most immediately with natural Creation — as gardeners, cooks, nurses, farmers, fishers, wood cutters, stone masons, carpenters, and so on — have by virtue of their contact with nature a daily and constant reminder of being in and part of Creation, as opposed to feeling oneself outside and removed from Creation, maintained in life support by artificial means. Now this perspective, if pushed far enough, can lead to a

Bonnie Ackerman

philosophical position of the Natural Person as the Good Person: primitive as pure, civilized as corrupt. We can pass over that idea as romantic fantasy; but we need to take into account Jesus' teaching about the rich man having as much chance of getting into heaven as the camel has of going through a needle's eye — a teaching which pushes us to reconsider the spiritual significance of being decently poor. (If the civilized ideal is effortless leisure, then there's something to be said about unrestrained civilization as corrupt if not evil.) And to be decently poor certainly seems to imply being productive in subsistent necessities as a village, a community, a neighborhood, a family, or a person.

Furthermore, it's possible to say (and lots of people have said it) that the more huge, automated, and abstract our machines become, the more we are removed from the immediacy of and reverence toward Creation. (Contrast in your thoughts a gardener with a hoe, a farmer with a team of horses, and an agribusinessman in an air-conditioned tractor.) And machines can "remove" people from Creation not only through the hubris of abstract power, they also literally remove people as one huge agribusiness forces out many small farms.

So let's reject the Noble Savage and the Noble Citizen as false ideas. Neither Wilderness nor Civilization lies at the heart of Jesus' teaching.

Paul Gilk lives in northern Wisconsin, and is the author of Nature's Unruly Mob: Farming and the Crisis in Rural Culture.

Yet we are biological beings. We do live in Creation. And civilization has facilitated a certain admirable technical mastery while bringing us to an acute awareness of global life and global humanity. By what means do we determine when technical mastery goes too far? When the small-scale, the agrarian, and the decentralized are excessively squeezed? When Civilization itself becomes a deity?

To put the matter as simply as possible, we need to ask in what way the teachings of Jesus have ethical implications for the structure of society and the conduct of the economy. We are not told to pursue power and riches but to live in simplicity and humility. We all know that the lure of power and wealth is strong, and thererfore we also know (or should know) that the temptation to sin is strong. And perhaps it is precisely in the meaning of sin, our understanding of what sin is or what to do about it, that Christians are in such disarray.

The conservative Christian, of the old school, smells sin in Progress and strongly prefers a pre-democratic social ordering. The liberal Christian, of a more modern school, is attracted to democratic socialism which seeks to balance a greater freedom with rational (and hopefully ecological) planning. The radical Christian, of a certain unschooled timeless enthusiasm, says Eternity is Now and so let's live in consecrated anarchy.

A good part of our difficulty — and it is both spiritual and political — is that the ideal of Civilization, Progress and all the mighty works of Man, have not only tended to overextend the mastery side of human consciousness and to diminish the awe-in-creation side but (and here's the rub) Christianity almost seems incapable of distinguishing itself from this civilized ideal. (James Watt, Ronald Reagan's first Secretary of the Interior, was a fundamentalist Christian who essentially said we should strip mine coal as rapidly as possible because the End of the World is at hand anyway.) Yet the civilized mind can idealize Wilderness and the Noble Savage (see Henry Nash Smith's Virgin Land: Myth and Symbol in the American West for an analysis of just how pervasive this tendency has been in American life) and scorn small-scale agriculture because it is so dreary and inefficient. Civilization is exalted, wilderness is exalted, and the 'middle landscape' of small-scale gardening and farming is ignored.

As if to prove the point, civilized economics pulls "surplus value" or capital out of the countryside and out of agriculture as fully and as "cheaply" as possible. This makes for "economies of scale," i.e., larger and fewer farms, and strikes awfully hard at the culture of small-scale farming (which is one of the important ways of being in daily contact with Creation). Or, to put the issue a little differently, modern agribusiness is civilized agriculture and, as

"Peace is a Human Right" by Emmy Lou Packard

such, shows clearly its ethical divergence from the teachings of Jesus. (I am not trying to say there is such a thing as "Christian agriculture," only that some forms and practices of food production are more consistent with biblical teaching.)

Respect for the power of arrogance holds one back from bold assertions regarding "Christian agriculture" and "Christian social structure." Yet the teaching of our tradition points us in certain directions and warns us away from others. We are to be conscientious stewards in Creation. (The Eden story is an object lesson in the possible consequences of tampering with the Tree of Life.) We can respect civilization for its work in global unification and we can distrust it for its universal tendency to build social pyramids which concentrate wealth and power at the top.

Perhaps the conservative, the liberal, and the radical have each a slice of a larger perspective. (Is it merely word play to suggest that we all might become, through prayer, radical conservatives with compassionate and liberal hearts?) What is the relationship between a vision of an ecological and humane society and any expectation we may have of achieving that vision? Are we justified in doing nothing because evil has the world by the throat? Or are we obliged to do what we can because that too is part of our ethical injunction?

Pray neither to the mountain nor to the skyscraper, neither to the tree nor to the color T.V. Pray rather to the Creator whose Being undergirds and infuses all Creation. Live simply that others may simply live.

✝

COUNTING WOMEN IN

by
Virginia Druhe

- If women's housework were included as an economic activity, Gross National Products of the world would increase by one-third.

- In most nations wives of farmers are not counted as farm laborers and their productive work is made invisible.

- When men lay a pipeline for a mile, it is hailed as a great economic activity. When women and children carry water for that mile, day after day, it is called housework and slips into economic oblivion.

- The work women do as volunteers, in training their children, creating a home, chopping wood, selling tortillas — none of this is counted in the systems by which nations assess their wealth and productivity.

- Figures for the ecomonic impact of crime, the drug trade and pornography are calculated with great concern and controversy.

We can see that something is wrong here. Our world's economic systems cannot see or value the work done by women in their traditional roles. And no economic system — or the people caught within it — can respond to values it does not recognize.

This system also devalues work women do outside the home. Women are half of the world's work force and half the women of employable age work outside the home. These women carry a triple work load: work at home, production and reproduction.

Nearly half of marriages, whether in developed or developing countries, end in divorce or abandonment. Half the households of our world are headed by women. Yet planners and economists persist in treating women's work for pay as a secondary economic activity, as not essential to either the home or the market. Because of this women receive less training, lower pay and are more often un- or under-employed; "development" programs in the Third World continue to focus on a male head of household who as often as not does not exist; and social programs in the U.S. continue to see affordable day care as optional.

Since women and children are not seen as part of the "market" of economic activity, they are the first to be excluded from its benefits in a recession. That is precisely why WIC and AFDC are seen as expendable by U.S. policymakers, but military hardware is not. Sixty per cent of the federal budget cuts in 1982 were at the expense of the poor — who are predominantly women and their children.

The women of our world do a vast percentage of human work and yet, because of how productivity is counted, that work becomes invisible and women do not have corresponding responsibility or authority in society.

One can ask whether this failure to see and value women as economic actors is a result of a patriarchal society, or whether the blindness is a convenient tool for maintaining predominant economic

Virginia Druhe, Karen House community member, recently led a local delegation to visit our companion communities in El Salvador.

power in male hands. But it doesn't really matter which came first, both our attitudes and our behaviors must change. We must challenge both, and it seems wise to begin with our own hearts and lives and institutions. We must learn to see women more accurately and we must learn to do economics differently.

The simple step of including "women's work" in a nation's GNP makes it visible — gives it value, influences perceptions, policies, planning. As it stands now, some of the activities that contribute most to the well-being of the human community are given no visible economic role or value. And many activities which contribute most to the GNP are quite destructive of general well-being. Breast-feeding a child is given no productive value, while conspicuous consumption of luxury items is seen as quite valuable.

Yet, one quickly realizes that the goal is not to put a price on creating a home or teaching one's child. What is the dollar value of nursing a dying relative? Of planting flowers in one's front yard?

The British economist, E. F. Schumacher wrote: "To press non-economic values into the framework of the economic calculus economists use the method of cost benefit analysis. This is generally thought to be an enlightened and progressive development as it is at least an attempt to take account of costs and benefits which would otherwise be disregarded altogether. In fact, however it is a procedure by which the higher is reduced to the lower and the priceless given a price. It can, therefore, never serve to clarify the situation and lead to an enlightened decision.

"All it can do is lead to self-deception and the deception of others.... What is worse and destructive of civilization is the pretence that everything has a price or... in other words, that money is the highest of all values."

A feminist economist in Finland, Hilkka Pietlla, suggests a way out of this dead end of seeing economic value only in the flow of money. Her alternative view of a national economy is to define three concentric rings of economic activity.

The center of the circles is what she calls the "free economy," which includes all work and production done for love or pleasure without pay. Here, at the very core of our economic lives, she places our most deeply human activities: creating beauty, cooking and cleaning for friends and family, driving the kids to a game, liturgy, service to the needy.

For me, this one statement creates an "Aha!" experience, a moment of grace when all my ways of seeing are turned upside down and I recognize with relief that <u>now</u> I am seeing rightly. Of course! Of course, these are the most central of all human life and are the necessary core of all economic life. The individual life or economic system which fails to provide this is dysfunctional.

Pietlla calls the second ring the "protected economy." This is production and services for the home market: housing, health care, food, transportation, communication, etc. As is already the case in most countries, these activities would be protected and regulated by the national government because they are so vital to society.

The final, outer ring is the "fettered economy" — fettered to the world market, captive of international prices and conditions. It is very useful for access to goods and services not produced in the national economy, but uncertain and costly.

Pietlla suggests some other ways to talk about economic processes that more easily include non-monetary values. Work can be measured by the number of people or number of hours of labor invested, instead of by dollars paid for salaries or for the finished goods. Thus garbage collection assumes equal value with a lawyer's day in court. Each cost eight hours of human effort.

Output can be measured by the number of units produced or the number of people cared for. Thus one $250,000 home where two people will live is seen as much less valuable than three $80,000 homes where twelve people will live. Changing how we talk about things changes our perceptions, attitudes and behaviors.

It is said that the poor are kept poor by systems and by their vision of themselves. Hilkka Pietlla's simple schema creates a Copernican revolution in both. It puts people — all people, equally — at the center of economic life, and reveals money as a secondary effect of some of the most precious human activities. ✚

[Some of the ideas and data in this article are taken from Marilyn Waring, <u>If Women Counted</u>, New York: Harper and Row, 1988.]

IVAN ILLICH ON DEVELOPMENT

Development has had the same effect in all societies: everyone has been enmeshed in a new web of dependence on commodities that flow out of the same kind of machines, factories, clinics, television studios, think tanks. To satisfy this dependence, more of the same must be produced: standardized, engineered goods, designed for the future consumer who will be trained by the engineer's agent to need what he or she is offered. These products, be they tangible goods or intangible services, constitute the industrial staple. Their imputed monetary value as a commodity is determined by state and market in varying proportions. Thus different cultures become insipid residues of traditional styles of action, washed up in one world-wide wasteland: an arid terrain devastated by the machinery needed to produce and

consume. On the banks of the Seine and those of the Niger, people have unlearned how to milk because the white stuff now comes from the grocer. (Thanks to more richly endowed consumer protection, it is less poisonous in France than in Mali.) True, more babies get cow's milk, but the breasts of both rich and poor dry up. The addicted consumer is born when the baby cries for the bottle: when the organism is trained to reach for milk from the grocer and to turn away from the breast that thus defaults. Autonomous and creative human action, required to make man's universe bloom, atrophies. Roofs of shingle or thatch, tile or slate, and displaced by concrete for the few and corrugated plastic for the many. Neither jungles, swamps, nor ideological biases have prevented the poor and the socialist from rushing onto the highways of the rich, the roads leading them into the world where economists replace priests. The mint stamps out all local treasures and idols. Money devalues what it cannot measure. The crisis, then, is the same for all: the choice of more or less dependence upon industrial commodities.

More will mean the rapid and complete destruction of cultures which are programs for satisfying subsistence activities. Less will mean the variegated flowering of use-values in modern cultures of intense activity. For both rich and poor the choice is essentially the same, although hard to imagine for those already accustomed to living inside the supermarket a structure different only in name from a ward for idiots.

Present-day industrial society organizes life around commodities. Our market-intensive societies measure material progress by the increase in the volume and variety of commodities produced. And taking our cue from this sector, we measure social progress by the distribution of access to these commodities. Economics has been developed as propaganda for the takeover by large-scale commodity producers. Socialism has been debased to a struggle against handicapped distribution, and welfare economics has identified the public good with opulence the humiliating opulence of the poor in United States hospitals, jails, or asylums.

By disregarding all trade-offs to which no price tag is attached, industrial society has created an urban landscape that is unfit for people unless they devour each day their own weight in metals and fuels, a world in which the constant need for protection against the unwanted results of more things and more commands has generated new depths of discrimination, impotence, and frustration. The establishment-oriented ecological movement so far has further strengthened this trend: it has concentrated attention on faulty industrial production by private owners. It has questioned the depletion of natural resources, the inconvenience of pollution, and net transfers of power. But even when price tags are attached that reflect the environmental impact, the disvalue of nuisance, or the cost of polarization, we still do not clearly see that the division of labor, the multiplication of commodities, and dependence on them have forcibly substituted standardized packages for almost everything people formerly did or make on their own. +

[Excerpted from Ivan Illich, Toward a History of Needs, 1971]

REMEMBERING BOLEN CARTER

by Patrick Coy

Bolen Carter, an early pioneer in the Catholic Worker movement in St. Louis, died at the age of 84 on July 18. With his wife of 45 years, Anne, the Carters' activism on behalf of peace and justice spanned five decades. The recipient of numerous awards and honors, Bolen nevertheless exhibited an elusive blend of humility and enthusiasm that never failed to impress both new and old acquaintances.

Bolen's activism began on May 7, 1935, when Catholic Worker co-founder Dorothy Day spoke to 800 people in the Law Auditorium at St. Louis University. In a front page article for the University News, Bolen enthusiastically reported on Day's suggestion that a group of students start a Catholic Worker house in St. Louis. Later that year, Bolen was among those that did just that. They opened up a storefront on Franklin Street, adjacent to the campus. But there was so much else he did, too.

He taught and held supervisory positions in the East St. Louis school system for 36 years. A proponent of liturgical renewal in the 1930's and 40's, and a tireless promoter of Cana Conferences (the precusor to today's Marriage Encounters), Bolen once explained the wellspring of his work. "We have always felt strongly that Catholic action needs to be strengthened and supported by our faith and the liturgy." Not surprisingly, Bolen was, as long as his health allowed, a daily participant in the Mass.

When Dorothy Day passed through the St. Louis area on her speaking trips, she usually stayed with the Carters in East St. Louis. The gospel call to hospitality that Anne and Bolen learned from Day was concretely applied through their habit of keeping a "Christ room" in their home, where they often housed needy people for a week, or even a month at a time. After retirement, the Carters were forced to leave their beloved East St. Louis when Bolen was shot at close range while answering the door at home. Although seriously injured, Bolen was characteristically forgiving, and was never bitter about the attack.

Deeply committed to the religious education of all youth, Bolen organized a long-running three day retreat program for the public school youth of East St. Louis. He was an advocate of racial equality in the many organizations and movements he was involved in, often before others were ready for it. Bolen's obvious love and concern for others served him well in presenting the truth. His natural warmth and charm made him a disarming sort. It was, for instance, Bolen's initiative that insured the Cana Conference movement was interracial from its inception, long before the civil rights movement changed many minds on the matter.

The Carters "retired" in 1966 when Bolen was 61. Having PAVLA (Papal Volunteers in Latin America), they quickly landed in British Honduras (Belize). They stayed for five years, working in Jesuit schools. Bolen eventually became PAVLA director in British Honduras. Their time in Latin America gave birth to a long- standing interest in the region. They returned frequently to British Honduras with school supplies, and when the U.S. began to make war with Nicaragua in the 1980's, they supported Witness for Peace.

ADE BETHUNE

Bolen loved visiting and swapping stories; he told his stories well, always holding your interest. He never tired of sharing beliefs, of building each other up in the faith. He was very well read and conversant on a wide and stimulating range of subjects. In discussion, he held firm to his beliefs, but it was with a gentle sort of certitude that never offended. When health allowed, he and Anne were regular visitors at Karen and Cass Houses, especially whenever we marked an anniversary, had a round table discussion, or found some excuse for a celebration. I know I am not alone among the community in saying that we always felt honored by these visits.

Bolen and Anne supported our work in so many ways. Every month a check would arrive in the mail from them with a warm note, asking our prayers for this or that, telling us they were praying for us, or thanking us for our work. Given their fixed retirement income, it was a faithful contribution we did not always feel worthy of, but were graced to receive.

In the Spring, 1983 issue of The Round Table, Bolen and Anne wrote something about Dorothy Day that could as easily be applied to Bolen's life. "It is often said", they wrote, "great people open visons for us—show us the way, not to imitate them, but to become ourselves more fully".

Bolen made it easier for people to honor the truth they already knew, to become themselves more fully. For that we will always be thankful. ✝

Patrick Coy's new booklet, "Overcoming Obsessive Anticommunism: New Answers to Old Questions", is published by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960. Cost is $2.50.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE NATUR OF W

As Christians, our beliefs include the inherent dignity of the human person, not only fashioned in the image and likeness of God, but also marvellously elevated by the Word's taking of flesh in Jesus Christ. It is this belief that grounds the "personalism" of Pope John Paul II. The only reason that human labor has dignity is that it is human labor; it is the expression of the human person. The primacy of labor over capital, consequently, is rooted in the recognition of primacy of persons in the world. This alone is the reason why the exploitation of labor is evil. This alone is the reason why questions both of faith and justice are relevant to the political and economic orders. And it is for this reason that all human labor must be properly humanized rather than alienated.

...In the sixth chapter of the Fourth Gospel, the disciples asked Jesus: "What must we do to perform the work of God?" To which he replied: "This is the work of God: have faith in the one whom God sent." Our fundamental labor as humans is the embodiment of trinitarian reality. Our work, as persons, is to have faith, to believe in the creative love of God, to have hope in God's saving action in us.... By being present to the Trinity in solitude, in relationship, in simplicity and in compassion, we rediscover the purpose of all other human works which are, in their fullness, the fruit of faith. John Kavanaugh, S.J., "Time to Stand And Stare," The Way, Volume 23, July 1983.

...Any third-rate engineer or researcher can increase complexity; but it takes a certain flair of real insight to make things simple again. And this insight does not come easily to people who have allowed themselves to become alienated from real, productive work and from the self-balancing system of nature, which never fails to recognize measure and limitation. Any activity which fails to recognize a self-limiting principle is of the devil.

...The type of work which modern technology is most successful in reducing or even eliminating is skillful, productive work of human hands, in touch with real materials of one kind or another. In an advanced industrial society, such work has become exceedingly rare, and to make a decent living by doing such work has become virtually impossible. A great part of modern neurosis may be due to this very fact; for the human being, defined by Thomas Aquinas as a being with brains and hands, enjoys nothing more than to be creatively, usefully, productively engaged with both his (her) hands and his (her) brains. E.F. Schumacher, Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered.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ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE
in the Third World

by
Rich Howard-Willms

Roshida is a resident of Saidpur, Bangladesh, a city of 150,00 located in the northern delta of this impoverished nation. She is the mother of two children, ages three and two; her husband is a rickshaw driver, and works from six in the morning until seven at night.

Ordinarily, Roshida would have little opportunity to supplement the income that her husband brings in, income that barely sustains their family. In this over-populated and intensely patriarchal nation, there are very few sources of income for women, and most are relegated to a role of dependance upon male members of their family.

However, Roshida has become part of a cottage industry called Action Bag Handicraft, a job program which allows women like Roshida to sew jute handbags together in their homes. Several times a month, Roshida goes to a center where she receives rough pieces of jute and leather strips. She then takes

them home to sew together the finished product, a handbag suitable to use as a purse or bookbag. She then returns the bags to the center to receive payment, and pick up more materials.

Joseph is a resident of Serowe, Botswana, a large village of 35,000 located in the Central Province of this arid country in the southern part of Africa. His tradition is one of a bushperson's, a semi-nomadic people who lived and hunted in the Kalahari Desert. This area suffers from periodic drought, and outside income sources are essential to the survival of this village.

Joseph belongs to a carving cooperative, creating wooden bowls, spoons and miniature kikas (mortar and pestles) in his rondavel (traditional hut) within his family compound. Besides being functional in his own day-to-day life, his carvings are imported to North America for sale through programs such as SELFHELP Crafts.

From the shanty town slums of Lima, Peru, to the rural, flood devastated villages of Bangladesh to the refugee settlements of Northeastern Thailand, many men and women like Roshida and Joseph, are struggling to provide income to their families through a non-institutionalized system of cottage industries.

Here in St. Louis, Plowsharing Crafts is a shop that acts as an outlet for the products created by many of these cottage industries. Plowsharing is part of a larger national network created by the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to help very needy and very deserving craftspeople throughout the developing world earn a decent living through the sale of their handiwork. The program is called SELFHELP Crafts, and is based on the premise of trying to help people help themselves.

Forty years ago, the program was created to help a group of women in Costa Rica with the distribution of their needlework. Several years later, the program expanded to include woodwork from Haiti and needlework from Palestinian women living on the West Bank.

Today, SELFHELP Crafts works with over 30,000 families, each their own little cottage industry, throughout 35 countries in the developing world. From Guatemala to Kenya to the Philippines, craftspeople are working to provide income, money necessary for the feeding, housing and educating of their families, through the production of their crafts.

Several facets of SELFHELP Crafts highlight its primary concerns of providing for the economic welfare of the producers and promoting human dignity. A strong attempt is made to purchase directly

Rich Howard-Willms is a founder and the director of Plowsharing Crafts Store in St. Louis. He struggles with the first world consumerism the store may promote and the third world economic independence it achieves.

from the craftsperson, as a way of ensuring that the person receives a fair wage. In many areas, attempts are made to work with cooperatives, a gathering of several producers working in the same type of cottage industry who are coming together for the common good of its members.

However, in many areas there remains a fear or uncertainty about the value of cooperatives, in which case a connection is made with either the individual cottage industry or a trusted intermediary who shares SELFHELP's philosophy. In all cases, the program wants to ensure that the producers receive fair wages based on local conditions and the economy.

Paul Peter Piech

In many cottage industries, SELFHELP is also attempting to promote the continuation of ancient arts and indigenous crafts, if that is economically feasible. Many of these people are the latest in a long line of producers stretching back centuries. The descendants of the craftsmen who built the Taj Mahal in the 17th century are now the creators of a multitude of beautiful soapstone carvings found in Plowsharing. Without access to the SELFHELP Crafts network, many of these producers would be unemployed.

A number of cottage industries involve the most disadvantaged of a developing country, people who have almost no chance in society. These include the handicapped, refugees, and minorities.

On a recent trip to Bangladesh and India, I was fortunate to visit a group of Bihari women creating wheat straw cards in their homes. The Biharis are a minority people in Bangladesh, and are discriminated against because of their Pakistani roots. Bangladesh officials have confined these people to a ghetto in the capital city of Dacca, in an area originally designed to house 40,000 that now holds more than 100,000. Opportunities to obtain work outside the ghetto are very limited, and life is very hard.

In the mid 70's, several Bihari women, with the aid of MCC, began creating and selling wheat straw cards out of their homes. Wheat straw cards are meticulously handcrafted in an assortment of designs using glue, wheat straw, paper and a knife. The women made them at night after the day's housework was finished. Today, the program employs over 200 women, with the majority between the ages of 14 and 20. Some of the women originally employed with the program were able to move back to Pakistan because of the money earned through the sale of wheat straw cards.

In dealing with cottage industries, MCC has often stressed the importance of establishing a savings fund. Craftspeople are urged to take a percentage of their earnings, in most cases not more than 5%, and create a savings fund. The money saved is then used in several ways: to aid in extreme emergencies (such as the recent flood that covered three quarters of Bangladesh); or to allow an individual to purchase a very special and important item; or to be used in a new business.

In our visit to Bangladesh, we saw two ways in which these savings had paid off abundantly. The first was a village woman who spent her days creating jute planthangers by the door to her hut. She had been successful enough to save money to buy a cow, which was now providing nourishing milk for her children. The pride in her eyes as she showed off her cow demonstrated vividly the dignity that one can attain through such a cottage industry.

"In today's world, including the world of economics, the prevailing picture is one destined to lead us more quickly toward death rather than one of true concern for development which would lead all toward a 'more human' life." -- Pope John Paul II ,"On Social Concern"

The second way in which we saw this savings plan at work took place in Roshida's hometown, Saidpur. An evening spent in a large marketplace concluded at a business created by several graduates of Action Bag Handicrafts. These women, who had worked for years creating jute handbags in their homes, had several years ago accumulated enough savings to start their own business. What they created proved to be unique in a couple of ways.

Their business was running copying machines, a Bangladeshi version of Pip Printing. By setting up business in the market, they reduced the time it took to get documents copied from two days (the time it took to travel to the nearest copy machine and back) to two minutes. They were the first to establish such a business in this city of 150,000.

But what made it all the more unique, and dramatic, was that it was run by women. In all our time in those countries, it was a rare sight to see women running a business in the market place. But by starting out as a cottage industry in making jute handbags, and gaining both income and dignity in the process, these women were able to overcome some fairly large odds in starting their own business.

SELFHELP's involvement, and success with cottage industries remains quite limited in light of the tremendous needs of the developing world. Cottage industries can be found everywhere, on each continent, but their dependence on gaining access to markets inhibits their further development. Over and over again on our trip, we heard the cry, "Give us more orders. Give us more work." What work we currently provide them through the SELFHELP network just isn't enough to keep them busy throughout the year, and hardships continue. To add to the pain is the fact that these people are only a small part of the 30,000 cottage industries we are trying to help throughout the world.

Our hope is that we can further international understanding by helping North Americans feel a connection with their brothers and sisters in the developing world; and that the purchases made in Plowsharing Crafts allow one to be a partner with the cottage industries that are part of the SELFHELP network. ✚

Gary Donatelli

FROM KAREN HOUSE

by

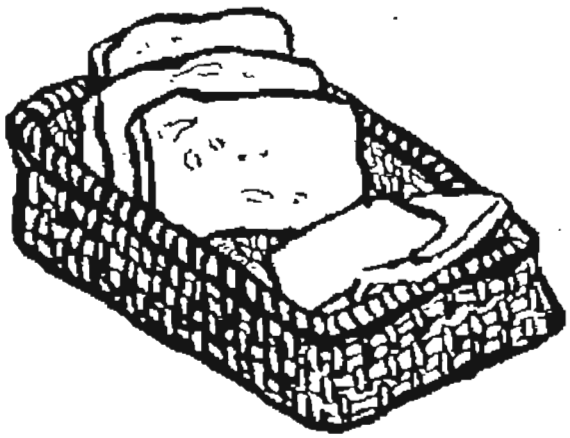
Teka Childress

I remember someone once asking me what success rate we had at Karen House. I found myself at somewhat of a loss as to how to answer the question. The difficulty I had in explaining the nature of our house came from the inherent problem one has when trying to explain a mystery. I see our house (like any other house) as a place where the kingdom of God (or the "reign" of God, to speak non-sexistly) is struggling to be. The reign of God is both gloriously here and yet not fully finished. We tend not to see it sometimes because we expect it to be present only in perfection and yet it is because of God's great mercy that it is truly present among us.

In looking back over our summer at Karen House, I see that signs of God's reign abound. God's life and reign shine forth in the courage and perseverance of women we know who are struggling with devastating mental illnesses. They struggle just to gain control over their own thoughts and, in the midst of this struggle, I have seen them again and again choose life and choose to believe in God. God's reign could be seen again in the choice of a young women to leave behind a home in which she lived because it was a house where drugs were sold. She had seen a child kidnapped over a drug deal and didn't want her own children to suffer that same fate. It was present again in another woman struggling to become drug-free for the first time in her adult life. And again it could be seen in the willingness of two of our guests to get up at 6 am every morning and walk a mile to work, work 8-10 hours and walk a mile home again so they could make just a bit more for their families than they could get on welfare. (Another guest of ours generously watched their children day after day while they were at work). And then we see God's life among us in the joy and generosity with which our guests, our volunteers, and our community members fix meals, clean the house, take house, and think up fun things to do. Also, there's the laughter which is an enduring sign among us of hope.

But I can't move off this reflection on the signs of the summer without mentioning one more: Jim and Katrina's marriage. Not only does it shine forth as a contradiction to the signs of our time which mitigate against commitment, but it was twice a miracle in that they made this commitment in the context of spending their first year of marriage together in a shelter. What a marvelous thing to do.

In looking over my list of signs from the summer, I feel a need to make a clarification, though. I don't want to give the impression that, as one walks into our house, one begins to hear heavenly harps playing. One is more likely to hear screaming. My point is that it is exactly in our very ordinary house, a house in many ways like any other house, that God reigns. The women who struggle with mental illness do so with great cries of lamentation as well as joy; the woman struggling to become drug-free had one relapse recently. The very reason that love in reality is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in



dreams is because in dreams we strip away all the messiness of reality. But it is precisely because God is there in the midst of this mess that we are not alone and are redeemed. And the love of a mother not wanting her children exposed to the dangers of the drug culture is just as real as one that exists in a more pristine environment.

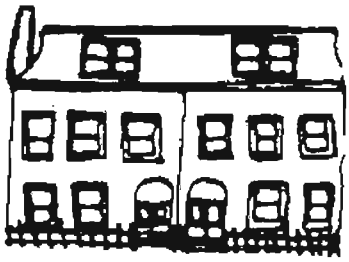
So in answer to the question: "What is your success rate?", I can only answer that we pray that God's reign come and that God's will be done. +

Teka Childress, Karen House community member, is likely to be found jogging through our neighborhood in the early morning.

FROM LITTLE HOUSE

by

Mary Ann McGivern, S.L.



Today is Labor Day. My closest ties to people who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow are to the United Farmworkers. The UFW have allowed me to participate in their struggle for justice for about 20 years now. They've been grateful to me, but my debt to them is far larger.

I learned nonviolence on picket lines here in St. Louis at the Schnuck's on McCausland and Manchester, a 905 liquor store on Olive Street Road near North and South, the Kroger's on South Jefferson, the National of South Grand. I learned to let go of the rejections, be open to whoever came along, bear a little bit of suffering. I put a lot of hours in on those parking lots and I learned that most people don't want to participate in injustice; but we need a course of action.

The course of action is the economic boycott. We're boycotting grapes again. We are also boycotting General Electric, Coke, Nestles, and the U.S. financial institutions that are major South African creditors. (see sidebar)

The economic boycott is a nonviolent tool that hurts the institution committing the structural violence, hurts management and shareholders. If management is willing to incur substantial financial loss, employees will suffer too, but a 5% drop in sales will cut out the profit margin without requiring layoffs. That's usually enough to change management's mind. Where the bosses are intransigent, in South Africa and on U.S. farms, the workers are willing to strike and be fired. They are leading the boycotts. They've invited us to join them.

WHY GRAPES AGAIN?

California Governor Deukmejian is not enforcing the California Labor Relations Act. One of the most serious effects is that there is no pesticide control. The poisons used on grapes make the people who pick them sick but complaints are not recorded and hospitalizations are not registered or investigated. Those poisons are still on the grapes when they get to the stores.

WHY NESTLES AGAIN?

The infant formula producers worked out a careful agreement with INFACT, Infant Formula Action, about five years ago. The companies agreed they would not give free samples, dress sales personnel in white and send them into the hospitals, or engage in other direct sales pitches to consumers. They have never completely complied. (Regional Hospital (in St. Louis) never stopped giving samples to mothers in return for free formula for nursery use.) But flagrant violations are rampant again and third world babies are dying because their mothers want the best for them, want what western babies get.

Bristol Meyers and American Home Products are U.S. based and are vulnerable to shareholder resolutions and court action. Nestles is better protected from consumer action by Swiss legislation and so the boycott is back in force.

GENERAL ELECTRIC

When INFACT won agreements with the infant formula producers, they considered whether to fold up and go separate ways. But instead they chose to focus on nuclear weapons manufacture and target GE for a boycott. GE doesn't just make good things for life.

GE is involved in more major nuclear weapons systems than any other company, including the B-1 bomber, Trident submarines, MX missiles, Minuteman missiles, star wars. GE is the sole producer of the neutron "trigger" for every US neclear bomb.

The company has designed the 49.2 pound plutonium power package for the NASA space probe Galileo, that will be launched in October. Petitions, letters, and publicity are all being brought to bear against GE in efforts to stop the plan to launch plutonium into space.

But longterm, the boycott remains the most effective tool. We can't refuse delivery of nuclear generators or jet fighter engines, but we can refuse to buy GE light bulbs and appliances.

Mary Ann McGivern, S.L., is just as likely to be found on a picket line as in her garden, which does not have a picket fence.

SOUTH AFRICA: COKE AND THE BANKS

I regret the Coca Cola boycott. I worked for the UFW for 6 months in Florida representing the UFW fruit pickers who worked for Minute Maid. Florida is a right-to-work state but Minute Maid, which is owned by Coke, was shamed by their terrible working conditions into negotiations. The endurance of the contract is evidence Coke is willing to act justly but their justice seems selective. Coke continues to make a profit from South Africa. The Coke logo is so ubiquitous that it cannot be ignored. It is a symbol of western support for apartheid.

South African exposure by the financial institutions listed here totals $2,540 million. It is the poor, the destitute, who have asked us to withdraw our financial support of apartheid. Over and over the churches and unions and illegal political organizations have begged us to get out. It is not enough to hear the cry of the poor. We must obey them, in whatever small ways we are able. ✝

Editor's note: If you decide to join the boycotts mentioned above, please consider writing a letter or post card to the company(ies) that you plan to boycott. This may help them get a feel for why people are shopping elsewhere. It may also be a way to further the dialogue if they wite back to you.... For more information on these boycotts, contact Mary Ann McGivern, S.L. at the Ella Dixon House.

South African Creditors:

Citicorp, Chase Manhattan, Manufacturers Hanover, Morgan Guarantee, Continental, Banker's Trust, Chemical Bank, Bank of America, First Chicago, Bank of New York, Security Pacific, American Express, North Carolina National Bank, Republic Bank.

Fritz Eichenberg

Charity consists of more than soup and bread... that the rich can do... the poor are your masters and you their humble insignificant servant... the more coarse and crude they are, the more dirty and demanding they are, the more you must love them... it is for your love... and for your love alone that the poor will forgive you, the bread you give them...

–Vincent de Paul

FROM LATIN AMERICA

by

Carol Donahue, C.PP.S.

According to a recent article in the Wall Street Journal, April 28, 1989, Bolivia's economic restructuring is to be commended. The budget deficit was cut by more than 10% of its gross national product and public service costs were increased. Most of the government subsidies have been abolished.

Basically what this has meant is increased depravation in a country that ranks second to Haiti in Latin America as far as poverty is concerned. Education and health care are becoming privatized with devastating consequences. The minimum salary has decreased by almost 50% since 1985 to around $36.00 per month. The median income in the country now is about $60.00 per month. The average family is composed of six persons and, in order to meet monthly expenses for basic necessities, they need $310.00.

Thus it is not surprising that, in 1988, 65% of the families of Bolivia were without electricity, 60% were without potable water, 78% had no type of sewer system and 42% of the families were without bedroom space. Furthermore, it is estimated that 50% of the Bolivian population is illiterate and 49% of the Bolivian children under 6 years of age suffer malnutrition in some form.

The above are only facts they do not depict the people's lived-reality. To gain insight into how all of the above is affecting the people, I have been staying in Cochabamba with some of my sisters who are part of Amanecer, a program that serves "street children" as well as women who have been forced out onto the streets. It is estimated that there are thousands of people who have been abandoned in the streets of this small, cosmopolitan city where the temperatures are such that they won't succumb to the elements. Nonetheless, malnutrition, filth, illiteracy and fear have become reality for these people, the majority of whom are children. Amanecer serves several hundred persons at any given time, but it is humbling to think of the many who are not being served.

In the time that I have spent with the women and children of the "street" I have seen that change is possible. Instability and lack of discipline are a way of life only because the people are desperate to survive. However, with much love and support these "hopeless members of society" are able to develop self-discipline, regularity and honesty. Eventually they achieve relative stability and independence. The stability, I believe, is relative because of the hardships inflicted upon them.

Recently I was exposed to a street child's first hand experiences of life. We were riding through the Concha, a large street market about 20 times the size of Soulard Market (in St. Louis). He eagerly and innocently made the following remarks. "The big building over there glows at night it's very pretty. There are large rats here and you can see them even during the day but they are especially scary at night."

Michael McCurdy

In the midst of our travels we kept encountering a large group of campesinos who were manifesting their outrage at the proposed eradication of the coca plant possibly with US herbicides. (It has many other uses other than for the production of cocaine and it is a source of employment for thousands). Many of the streets were blocked and it was taking about 1/2 an hour to get through a blocked intersection. Being impatient, we decided to park the car and walk to the women's shelter where a dentist was waiting to deal with my small companion's toothache, one of the effects of being undernourished.

Carol Donahue, C.PP.S., recently returned from Bolivia in time to see a neighborhood park developed by the Land Trust dedicated in her honor.

José, who was leading us, was only seven but he had an uncanny sense of direction. We had turned so many corners that when we finally accepted his help, we realized that we needed to go right through the group of demonstrators. There were many anti-Yanqui signs and slogans and I was a bit uncomfortable to say the least.

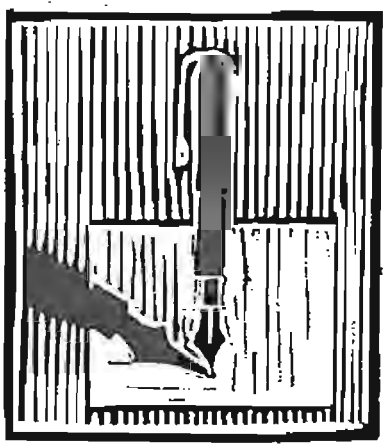
We crossed one of the busy streets and when we reached the island in the middle we were told to stay where we were. José very gently took each of our hands and supported us in our time of discomfort. When there was a pause in the march, the protestors kindly parted their ranks to permit us to pass. Such compassion first from the people who are being threatened by our government and then from a child who was in pain. A year ago, José was on the road to being a confirmed delinquent. Last Thursday he was, for me, the Christ as he led us on our way. I find it very hard to accept that our North American power and influence are jeopardizing the future of many people of Bolivia and especially hard to accept that José may lose his chances for a promising adult life.

Bolivia's future indeed appears bleak lands destroyed by herbicides, minds destroyed by malnutrition and illiteracy, slavery to those who are rich and powerful, the potential presence of physical violence, and most of all the violence which poverty inflicts upon its innocent victims.

Bolivia is the heart of South America. The precarious situations of most of its citizenry make a social irruption of violence a very real possibility. The same precarity exists for most of its neighbors. It appears that instead of helping to remedy the situation, the rich and powerful plan to invest money in factories, etc. because there is the opportunity for cheap labor. There is also government protection for them because the country is so dependent on outside monies.

Recently, there has been increased concern over the military presence of the United States. In fact, caution is being urged so that Bolivia does not become the "Honduras of South America." The situation bears watching because South America should not be a colonial servant to its neighbors from the North.

FROM OUR MAIL BAG



The following sample of responses to Harriette Baggett's remarks, reported in the "From Little House" article of our last issue, necessitates a clarification.

Although The Round Table is a Catholic Worker journal, the editiors/community do not pretend that there is always unanimity in the community on such issues as abortion. Good people differ on crucial issues. Unless otherwise stated, no one appearing in The Round Table, including Harriette in her brief remarks, necessarily speaks for the St. Louis Catholic Worker community.

While we strive to reverence Catholic Worker tradition, we do so with two clarifications in mind.

First, application of the Catholic Worker perspective can vary in good conscience from individual to individual. Second, out of respect for individual freedom, we would not want to censure absolutely an individual for holding a position with which some, or even all others, disagree.

I felt the need to respond to (your last issue concerning) a woman reflect(ing) on her march for legalized abortion. She said, "But I believe women must exercise their own full humanness."

My own reaction: If full humanness is exercised in opting for abortion, then our humanness has digressed back to the apes.

Fr. Ed Rue
St. Louis, MO

(In the last issue, you mention that the author Jonathan) Kozol speaks of how we "distance" ourselves from the homeless – how pervasive that is! (But then) you have Harriette distancing herself from the unborn children killed by abortion.

I should say our unborn. I lost a baby to abortion 10 years ago. Lost? I should say sacrificed – to a false god. I gave my child over to death.

Neither a woman nor a man is being a "responsible moral agent" or is experiencing her/his "full humanness" when we give over even one fellow human being to death.

...Would my child have been "unwanted?" By everyone? By the whole world? By God? Certainly not! Many people want to adopt. Don't you believe in adoption, being as we are adopted children of God?....

What a painful irony – Dorothy Day's picture on page 17 (of the last issue). I met her in 1973 and she told me that she had an abortion (which) she regretted her whole life because it was a sin against her own woman-heart, and against the Creator of Life....

I cannot adequately express to you the sorrow that you have renewed in my heart.... I know that law is not the whole answer, but I do believe that the law should stand against the destruction of human life.

...Work for the humane alternatives -- but while you're working -- never, NEVER give anyone over to death.

Susan Moses Clark
Erie, PA

P.S. I say again: the babies are not unwanted. It is we who are unwanting. And we increase the spirit of rejection, the spirit of "distancing," the spirit of unwantingnes" when we support abortion. Harriette, I love you, please think this through again. Abortion hurts us, what it does to our souls.

After reading "From Little House" in the last issue, specifically Harriette's journal entry, I felt so sad. She spoke of supporting legalized abortion as "a journey of faith." She also said that (through abortion) "people will see that a woman's life is...as significant as a man's life, and that a woman is a responsible moral agent."

It would seem to me that being a responsible moral agent and the act of killing are incongruous. The Catholic Worker "philosophy" has been to protect and value human life consistently, most especially those who cannot protect themselves -- the oppressed. Who could be more helpless than the innocent unborn, and what greater form of oppression is there than killing?

And as far as equality among the sexes goes, I have had 3 abortions and they never elevated my status in any way. My life was not enhanced, nor was I freed from any social/psychological/economical crisis. On the contrary, my self-esteem is poor, and I have imprisoned myself in an emotional/spiritual crisis greater than I have ever known in my life. It is very clear to me that I denied my moral responsibility when I participated in the taking of those 3 lives, and sometimes that hurt is so great that I think my heart is really breaking in two.

Jesus calls us to love and to sacrifice. The Catholic Worker (usually) embodies these two challenges, but leaves out the unborn. Yes, the poor are oppressed, and poor women appear to be especially oppressed when unwanted pregnancies occur. But abortion is a response totally outside of and opposite to the realm of compassion. No status (economic or otherwise) is elevated, no problem solved.

Sher DeGenova
Flemington, NJ

In your description of your support for legalized abortion, you implied -- if I understand you correctly -- that a woman's "humanness" is strengthened by legal aborton.

I have always found that people's humanness is damaged by rejecting or killing another human creature. Do men, also, strengthen their personal self-worth by destroying unwanted offspring? Or is it only women whose personhood can be enhanced in this way?

Juli Loesch Wiley
Johnson City, TN

This is just to express our disappointment and bewilderment at the reflection by Harriette in the Summer 1989 issue under "From Little House." It's hard for us to understand how Harriette can reconcile the violence of abortion in her search for justice; it's harder to understand how the editors tacitly accept her suggestions.

We have long admired the Worker for its commitment to truth and justice. We treasure your ongoing voice and witness for the Gospel. It seems so very out of character to speak of "the sin of presumption in bringing children into the world when there is no way to care for them." It would seem that this presumption, be it in pursuit of God or not, might never let us rationalize a justice in abortion.

Chris and Nancy Weigel
St. Louis, MO

You've done it again -- invaded my life with things worth talking/thinking about. East St. Louis -- how little I know thee!

And you, Joe Angert, expressed so well how I feel. I can't get inside the bodies and souls of the people -- all I can do is stay on the surface of what I see.

I'm placing my copy of The Round Table in a very prominent place in "The Country." People like us who savor that environment especially need to be sensitized to the realities and the hopeful possibilities of East St. Louis.

Dorothy Armbruster
Glendale, MO

...Among some of the things that helped from the last (spring) issue:

1) Teka Childress wrote of her trip to El Salvador ending with, "There is hope in El Salvador. It is clear we can do something that can help bring that about, principally withdrawing support from the war...."

2) Mary Ann McGivern....she made me realize (that) "being present to the moment is being present to God. The rest is for God to do." There is a lot of encouragement in that warm thought.

3) Among other good articles was Harry Cargas' review of Pat Coy's book, A Revolution of the Heart, ending with the good thought, "...it helps us to be grateful to those who do not buy charity, the way most of us do, but who live charity in the example of Jesus."

This isn't a very good summation of thoughts from The Round Table, but it helped me. Please keep it "Comin'."

Marge Morrison
St. Louis, MO

With each issue of The Round Table, I marvel at its excellence, variety, depth, charm. "They'll never be able to exceed this"....and then you do.

I was particulary moved by "East St. Louis: Hope in Hard Times." Thank you for a clearer picture of East St. Louis, its people, their hope and their courage.

Maggie Fisher
St. Louis, MO

Round Table Talk

by Patrick Coy

Along with my wife Karin, and our friend Dave, I made a nine-day backpacking trip this summer in the Jim Bridger Wilderness of Wyoming's Wind River Mountains. Six of those nine days were spent at alpine lakes above treeline, at elevations exceeding 11,500 feet.

With sheer granite walls rising to especially jagged peaks, the Wind River Range is a climber's delight. It is also a fisherperson's paradise, and that is what allured the three of us. The Bridger Wilderness offers over 1,300 alpine lakes, each with its own stunning setting, and many teeming with trout. It seemed to me a place of unique beauty, for its beauty was rugged, frequently harsh, and it did not come without costs.

In the thin, hot, and dry alpine air, with the treeless environ providing no shade, Karin became seriously dehydrated one afternoon. Her resulting heat stroke even included delusions which, much later, provided us with some comic relief! Plenty of water and some rest brought her quickly around, reminding us of the preciousness of clean, healing water.

During the first few days, while our hiking was mostly uphill, we shouldered especially heavy packs. One carries a surprising amount of food and supplies for three people on a nine day pack trip. As I go about my daily life back home, it is easy to take for granted the food I eat each day. Not so with backpacking. We were painfully aware of this, quite literally. Such is the valuable and elusive grace of backpacking: the grace of awareness.

Backpacking trips, especially long ones, do more than provide lessons about the workings and beauty of God's creation. By being pushed to one's physical and emotional limits, taking a few risks, testing one's resourcefulness, much can be learned about human nature, and oneself.

Aside from the seldom encountered backcountry rangers, there are no cops in the wilderness. This, too, provides insights into human nature and social responsibility.

While there are no cops, congressionally-mandated "Wilderness Areas" like the Bridger have regulations governing their use. This is to insure they retain the wild and untrammeled spirit that so many people go there to experience, yet threaten with their presence. This is the paradox of our shrinking wilderness.

One regulation forbad camping within sight of certain trails and lakes. Who wants to shoulder heavy packs for days up steep mountain trails only to have their view of otherwise stunning wilderness lakes dominated by brightly colored tents pitched near the water's edge? Who wants to listen to human voices carrying far across the alpine waters, filling up the unfamiliar glacial stillness with the much too familiar?

Because there were folks who disregarded the regulations, I can attest that the often intangible but profound spirit that defines the wilderness experience rapidly evaporates in such a scenario. And it just ain't fair. Especially when you know there are plenty of alternative campsites off the lake or trail that require only a small extra effort to find and that carry their own unique, tucked-away charm. That extra effort is also rewarded with the satisfaction of knowing you are doing your part to preserve the wilderness setting, and with a sense of accomplishment for ferretting out one's own site, rather than grabbing the obvious and the often over-used.

These were not, however, the only folks who failed the wilderness ethics test. So did I. I did not talk to them, explain the wisdom of the regulations, remind them of the need for voluntary cooperation, or point out the inherent unfairness of their actions. I was on vacation I told myself, and was not interested in assuming the hassles of being a cop!

Although I was angry and somewhat resentful, that still wasn't enough for me to act on the responsibility I assumed for the wilderness when I entered it. That responsibility extends not just to protecting it from avoidable detrimental effects stemming from one's own use, but from that of others too. I had let the truth and a teachable moment slip away like glacial meltwater over a mossy rock. Now, because of my timidity, these folks were likely to continue in their damaging ways.

As more and more people discover the joys of hiking, canoeing, camping, and backpacking, and as "development" encroaches on our shrinking wilderness, the importance of this lesson in social responsibility will only increase.

Whether it is building fires where they are proscribed, creating extra campfire rings where others already exist, riding ATV's in streams, poaching, polluting the waters by not using biodegradable soap, washing dishes directly in the river or lake, or simply littering, the responsibility to intervene on behalf of the Earth belongs to each one of us. ✚

Patrick Coy's new booklet, "Overcoming Obsessive Anticomunisim: New Answers to Old Questions", is published by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960. Cost is $2.50.

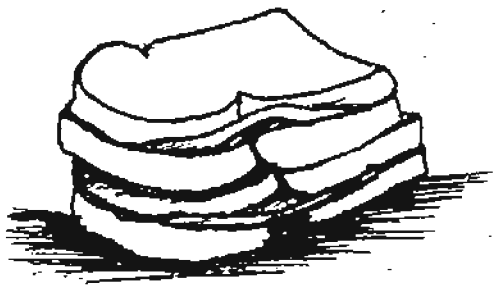
Round Table Discussions — Join Us!

Reflections on Living in El Salvador
Ann Manganaro, S. L.
Friday, November 17, 7:30 pm
Karen House

Libya, Twenty Years With Qaddafi: A Slideshow and Commentary
Pat Coy
Friday, December 1, 7:30 pm
Karen House

Food and drink will be served after each presentation

Things we need:



Sandwiches for our food line

Plumbing services

Blankets

Personal hygiene items

The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free. Please write to The Round Table, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO 63106. Donations are gladly accepted to help us continue our work with the poor. People working on this issue include: Joe Angert, Margaret Boyer, Pat Coy, Virginia Druhe, Bill Miller, Tom Nelson, Katrina Plato, Barb Prosser, Ellen Rehg, and Mark Scheu. Letters to the editor are encouraged; we'll print as many as space permits.

THE ROUND TABLE

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