
FOURTH WORLD REVIEW

*For Small Nations
Small Communities
Small Farms
Small Shops
Small Industries
Small Banks
Small Fisheries
& the Inalienable
Sovereignty of the
Human Spirit*

No. 112

2001

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REAL COMMUNITIES CHARTER



**RADICAL MAGAZINES:
THE PAPWORTH
AWARDS 2001**

Editorial:
THE GREAT DIVIDE

FOURTH WORLD REVIEW No. 112

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THE GREAT DIVIDE

THE GLOBAL CRISIS can scarcely fail to be reflected in the divisions which beset the radical movement, if one can append to the movement a collective label which it scarcely merits, and an identity of which it is scarcely aware.

Its different strands, ranging from those intensely 'spiritual' drives which find relief, if not solutions, in an unending round of prayer, meditation and 'personal development', the latter including every form of religious belief in the calendar and which will incorporate Buddhism, Sufism, the teachings of someone who calls himself Maitreya, the 'sacred teachings of Egypt', mantra colour healing and, well, you name it, not forgetting tarot readings, it is around.

Then there are those who envisage salvation through submission to bodily exercises, advanced massage, biodamion electro-crystal therapy, neuro-muscular therapy, problems of 'posture', 'balance', craniosocial therapy and the imperatives of yoga, tai chi and the sublimations of the 'Alexander technique', to name but a few.

Then there is the single issue brigade, whether it is animal rights, 'energy', the whales, the rain forests, 'globalisation', 'third world debt' and so on. Not least are those devoted to 'peace' and 'non-violence',

an entire spectrum of 'pacifism', embracing 'actions' or 'demonstrations' devoted to 'peace', 'anti war campaigning' and so on. Each of these is brimful of assurance that if only, (ifonlyism!), everyone would help to resolve this particular problem by following this particular prescription we could all then sleep peacefully in our beds at night.

The root of the crisis

Some of these multifarious initiatives are little more than attempts to exploit current stresses and discontents for gain, others are idealistic attempts to grapple with prevailing abuses of power, (and some are a bit of each), but all of them share one imposing factor in common: much of their literature would bore the toenails off any tortoise and has about as much influence and effect on the passage of events as a fly on the wing.

What they all have in common too is a failure to grasp the overall nature of the crisis, that we are currently in the grip of a crisis of power, power out of control, a crisis of such gigantic proportions that within the prevailing political and economic construct, there is not the remotest prospect that it can be made responsive to the moral demands so many of these concerns are seeking to promote.

We have only touched on some of the

more prominent of these manifestations; we do so not to denigrate the efforts being made but to emphasise their frequent lack of relatedness, or even relevance, to the overall crisis and to the forces promoting it. It is this failure which is doing so much to negate what many of them are seeking to achieve. 'Peace' campaigning, for example, and it is only one, so often is based on a simplistic approach which appears to assume that we have only to mount sufficient 'demonstrations' for peace, or to publish enough propaganda for 'peace', that somehow the vast unresponsive masses will be converted to 'peace', they will elect 'peace' political leaders, and, and? No attempt appears to be made to think beyond this; it seems to be assumed that joining, reading or helping to distribute literature for 'peace' are somehow effective ends in themselves.

The power realities

There is a failure here to take on board the realities. 'Peace', as a cause, is already victorious! Most people everywhere do not want war, even if large numbers will accept conscription or a regular pay packet to become members of a fighting force.

Most 'peace' literature has its own inimitable quality of highly predictable tedium and amounts to little more than the already convinced, concerned and committed having a rap session with each other whilst the rest of the world goes about its consumerist-dominated business under governments arming and preparing for war, if not actively engaged in war, whilst oblivious or indifferent to whatever 'peace' people may say or do.

It will be seen that the main problem is not war, just as the main objective cannot be

'peace' without pursuing a distorted complex of priorities.

The problem facing the 'peace' movement is indeed one facing almost all attempts being made to counter one aspect or other of the global crisis when no account is taken of the power realities confronting us. In bald terms it amounts simply to this: Economic forces, global in their reach, have hijacked the democratic process. They (and 'they' are the oil, tobacco, supermarket, armaments, communication, transport and other concerns), now define the terms on which mass election exercises are conducted; it is they who determine and promote the values that now constitute the general and largely consumerist orientated mindframe on which electoral battles are fought; it is they, with their ubiquitous and unseen 'donations', which make it possible for political leaders to campaign at all; and it is they who have put the entire europlot on the road and who are able effectively to destroy the reputation of any political leader who presumes to pursue policies which may run counter to their interests.

It is they who destroyed Mrs Thatcher's premiership (and whatever her other demerits she did put her neck on the block by opposing their europlot), it is they who are bent on promoting a common European currency, and who are promoting the sedulously persistent campaign to undermine the British monarchy and the House of Lords.

It may be thought odd that the fortunes of these twin bastions of hereditary privilege should be matters of radical concern but, as is so often the case in politics, the choice has become one not of good or bad, but of bad or worse, for the alternative to the largely powerless monarchy and its trap-

pings is not a new dawn of freedom but the consolidation of the power of anonymous boardroom moguls as they continue to ensnare the citizen in their mindless, profit-making rush to destroy the environment, the prospects of peace, the integrity of their social structures and the prospects of any possibility of a decent social existence.

The local solution

This then is the great divide, between those who grasp these realities and those who do not. Between those who see that any attempt to influence mass power structures is simply playing their game and engaging in an endless process of futility, who opt in consequence to reject the mass approach and seek the empowerment of the local community in every way possible, aware betimes that only on such a scale can the exercise of moral choices and the deployment of moral forces stand any chance of being effective in countering the giant evil, destructive hedonism that now holds sway, and those who earnestly seek to promote moral options on a mass scale.

Green parties, street demos, the whole literature and propaganda of protest, however worthy their aims, are but expressions of ineffectuality and a failure to confront the forces of power in realistic terms. Those who indulge in them may achieve a measure of ego gratification and even a sense of achievement, but they are nonetheless dangerous to the radical cause simply because they divert energies and concern from the only avenues that hold out the remotest prospect of progress.

IN THIS LIGHT it is surely clear that however worthy, however urgently necessary and however ardently promoted, none of these

worthy causes can hope to have more than a marginal effect on the workings of a social structure in the grip of demonically anti-social global corporation brigands and their political puppets.

How, for example, is it possible effectively to promote a society geared to a sane policy of energy conservation when that society can only operate by squandering energy and material resources at an ever accelerating rate in pursuit of the sacred goal of 'growth'? Given the giant, uncontrollable scale of its motive drives, any serious attempt to pursue, let us say, sustainability at the expense of growth would require a revolution in the values by which billions of people have been media mind-doctored to accept, that ever increasing quantitative consumption is one of the basic tenets of existence.

A society based on such concepts of growth, given the technologies available, is at war with itself and its own prospects of survival. The need to abandon mass motoring, to take but one energy need of a legion, is imperative on grounds of ecological sanity, social cohesion, global economic justice and generational decency (we are currently burning oil with our motoring that our grandchildren may well need to boil an egg), what green party can hope to prevail against it? In response to any serious 'Green' electoral success the media machine would swing into action with dire warnings of unemployment, economic catastrophe and a harrowing concern to protect the citizen freedom of choice to spend his money as he wishes.

What is at issue here is not a need for change of government policy but a change of the nature of government itself. ■

A REAL COMMUNITIES CHARTER

William Shepherd

MOST PARTY POLITICIANS, mass media commentators and corporate executives are genuinely perplexed by the antics of our apathetic youth as they drag their anarchist circus around the globe from Seattle to Washington, Prague, Nice, London, Gothenburg and Genoa. 'What a nerve!' they cry. 'How dare they pitch their tents across the streets from our luxury hotels and disrupt our democratic deliberations!'

I was first introduced to the full force of the World Trade Organisation's Multinational Agreement on Investments (MAI) in the summer of 1998 at a seminar put on by the Swedish Green Party for *Almedalsveckan* on the Baltic island of Gotland. During the seminar it was pointed out that the government boycotts and sanctions against South Africa would have been illegal... with the result that apartheid might still be the policy and Nelson Mandela still in jail!

Nor was this the least of it. States rights in the USA would have gone out of the bathroom window as no country or city would have been allowed to introduce zoning laws or permit favouring its own nationals or local residents. As for notions of community reinvestment acts, these too would have been outlawed along with anything else that sought to shift the balance of power away from outside interests and in favour of locality.

Unfortunately there is too little recognition of the extent to which governments... and in particular 'Big Government' as a species of government... have brought this

corporate backlash upon themselves by their 'rule of lawyers' and their 'government by legislation'. But a response that sets a new corporation-friendly set of regulations against the old government-friendly regulations is not the answer. If we are to grapple with the global crisis, which is first and foremost a crisis of power brought on by gigantism, then we must go further and come to terms with the 'Who? Whom?' of the regulating process itself. Who has the power over whom? With whom do they wield it? And to what ends? Not that this is the first time that the question of the 'rule of law' has boiled down to the rather different question of 'who's law rules'. Sir Thomas More ran foul of an earlier engagement.

But there are grounds for hope because as legitimacy drifts away from the WTO's member governments so niches will start to open up for legitimate government representing real people in real communities. Before long someone will need to invent the idea of 'The League of Real Nations' to help these new nations fight their corners. The side effects may be the main effects and the bad news may not turn out to be so bad after all. Nor is that the only piece of good news in these troubled times. Quite unwittingly, the New York lawyers commissioned by the WTO to draft its Charter for Corporate Global Business have done a tremendous job on our behalf. In aikido terms, this MAI provides an excellent first draft for a 'Real Communities Charter'.

Power only flows one way at a time, so by shifting the nexus of power in the MAI from the World Trade Organisation to a myr-

iad of Village Common Sense Trusts... and this can be done by inserting a few 'not's' and 'no's' here and there... each stretching little further than 35 miles from where we live. Once these are in place 'locality' could come into its own and begin its long fight back against 'interests'... particularly those of the 'riding roughshod over' type.

Localisation with self-sufficiency has the potential to cause much more damage to the anarchy of corporate power, with its mindless puruist of bigger and bigger profits, than any anti-capitalist protest. Besides, what would better revitalise national democracy in these times of electoral apathy, where the turn-out at elections in many

countries is now sliding towards the 50% of that beacon of democracy the United States of America, than voting for parliaments that have the real power to choose between two identical charters; the one where all the votes are, giving sovereignty to local communities; and the other ceding power and sovereignty to boardroom barons shuffling papers behind closed doors – and steel barricades – in unhealthy buildings. Any Lord Lieutenant of the County that managed to push this through County Hall would soon be the envy of the country.

'All power to the parish' is the fastest way to ensure that all wealth stays in the county!

THE CHARTER

Peter Etherden & Anton Pinschof

THE PURPOSE of this Charter is to provide support for the promotion of all forms of decentralised community power to village or neighbourhood level, not least in the field of politics, economics and communication.

Over the last century or more there has been a sedulous transfer of the power of local villages, parishes and neighbourhoods to the ambit of central government. The measures involved have been presumed to be justified on the grounds of efficiency and economy. Neither has been justified by events.

Numerous services heretofore often conducted on a voluntary basis by dedicated, public-spirited local citizens have been taken over by salaried officials appointed by the central government, with a number of consequences which has helped to create a gratuitous social tragedy

of ever widening dimensions.

It is a tragedy which has been accentuated by the emergence of new forms of power in commerce, communications and transport which have also been deployed on a non-local basis and which have served even more to divorce the citizen from any real control over many of the many factors that now dominate citizen life.

Two centuries ago an average villager had a distinct element of control over his school, medicine, police, entertainment, dress, cookery, food production, transport, shopping, welfare and social provision. Today such control has passed from citizen hands into the hands of powerful central bureaucracies appointed by the central government or into the hands of no less powerful commercial concerns.

This process has often been justified by reference to the extension of the franchise,

but again what is evident is an increasing decline of citizen influence or capacity to control as giant political parties, subject to their own highly centralised bureaucracies, ordain their workings and their general policy direction.

What emerges from this process is not one in which the citizen is able to express preferences which party or government then seeks to effect, rather is it a matter of policy decisions by powerful centralised bodies to which the citizen has no effective response except to assent.

It is a process which gives enormous powers of patronage to party leaders and even more to heads of government and it is one quite incompatible with the spirit and practice of the democratic ethos. Such patronage is a powerful weapon in the hands of those who deploy it to secure subservience to their wishes rather than concurrence with the wishes of the citizen.

One overall consequence of this lack of citizen control is control by boardroom moguls pursuing purely short-term pecuniary gains as obliged by company law and the shareholder primacy system in some countries. It is a deployment of power, undemocratic, irresponsible, pervasive and importunate, which has come to act on a global scale and helped to create the current ever deepening global crisis that now dominates all human life.

It is a crisis which is destroying significant elements of the life support systems of the planet, vast proportions of irreplaceable reserves of finite resources and involving a wholesale degradation of the quality of life at numerous levels. Not least it has set in train a number of forces which betoken the most catastrophic consequences, whether in terms of another global war, environmental

collapse or social disintegration, which ought now to be the central concern of all public policy considerations.

It is a crisis which can only have ensued from a grotesque distortion of the decision-making power within human societies and can only be resolved if that distortion is corrected so that such power is effectively in the hands of the people in their neighbourhood communities.

We therefore resolve:

The council of a neighbourhood community, as constituted by its members, shall exercise full power to determine its policies on:

Schools	Roads
Clinics	Planning
Shops	Property
Police	Land Use
Banking	Air Space

It shall also exercise power to elect as its representative for membership of all regional boards governing:

Food & Agriculture	Postal Services
Police	Rail & Bus Services
Water	Radio
Gas	Television
Electricity	Public Health
Sewerage	Education

and such other regional services as may be necessary for its common interests with other neighbourhoods of the region.

We cannot expect to transform overnight the bureaucratic and market-dominated subversion of democracy now prevalent. So often we are not even in contact with our neighbours, and in seeking change we tend to immerse ourselves in mass political bodies – themselves part of the disease rather than its cure – or in good causes such as campaigning for ‘peace’, or for the homeless, or to save the rain forests, where concerned

people tend to find themselves in a moral ghetto largely talking to each other.

A new approach to secure neighbourhood power implies a need to focus on the neighbourhood and on its problems and possibilities for both local and wider social transformation. No body can be healthier than the cells of which it is comprised. We cannot begin to do this if we are not in contact with our neighbours and this means we need to explore and adopt such measures as enable us to form and maintain working community relationships.

To this end we might consider some of the following initiatives:

- ◆ A street community notice board. Set up with fanfares and a celebration. Let people know it is their media to use when they want to exchange, sell or share anything, advertise lost pets, parish sports team fixtures, church service times, social or cultural events, etc.;
- ◆ A parish community journal dealing with all the concerns and problems of the community including jobs, health, schooling, transport, poverty, etc. The three key people here are someone with good writing skills, someone to chase the advertising and someone who won't take no for an answer;
- ◆ Weekly, fortnightly, monthly regular coffee bar or pub meeting to socialise and discuss parish affairs and empowerment problems;
- ◆ Promote parish social sporting and cultural clubs and events;
- ◆ Shop locally and support local traders. Promote boycotts of giant supermarket chain stores and chain pubs or restaurants;
- ◆ Grow your own food or buy from local organic sources. Help to promote a

Local Exchange Trading Scheme (LETS);

- ◆ Promote a local credit union or a local bank. Boycott big banks;
- ◆ Set an example of living simply and choosing renewable sources. Recycle rubbish, compost kitchen waste. Don't own or drive a car when public transport is available. Economise on electricity, gas, water and oil;
- ◆ As a representative of your parish seek out representatives of other parishes to form grassroots reform and pressure groups to counter the endless abuses of central power;
- ◆ Make yourself a focus and a catalyst for political and economic transformation. Ensure the parish journal focuses on real problems, especially on poverty, pollution and powerlessness, and is not just a bromidial bout of wishywashyness and social chitchat;
- ◆ Promote parish celebration events for parish life. A special banquet or dance for prominent parish people's birthdays or parish anniversaries;
- ◆ An annual 'Parish Day' when we elect the mayor and councillors, celebrate with a procession, sports event, dancing, feasting and celebrating.

Mass anonymity is its own form of mass powerlessness. Power cannot be in two places at once. If centralised government controlling a mass electorate has the power, then the citizen in no way has it or, on such a basis, can have it.

By itself the power of a single parish can be pricked out of existence as easily as a bubble, but multiplied around the world as it must be, and as it surely before long will be, its capacity to prevail, like that of any organic multicellular structure, will prove unassailable. ■



FORUM

CHOICE

There is an argument whether organic farming or discriminate use of pesticides is best. Each locality should be free to make its own choice, and no decision should be a private one in this or any other matter affecting the health of our planet.

Tony Dixon

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REVERSE TRUTH

I agree that a concerted effort on the part of the population at large to withdraw their patronage from supermarkets would do wonders in breaking their stranglehold. When METRO, the German equivalent of Sainsbury's, attempted to establish themselves near Boyen in Sudtiroal the local population, a hearty folk well versed in defeating tyrants (under the leadership of Andreas Hofer and armed only with farm implements, their predecessors trounced the combined armies of France and Bavaria twice in succession in 1809 at Berg Isel) simply refused to buy there.

The point was, however, that they still had recourse to an excellent, close-knit local supply system providing top grade local produce, in which, for example, fresh fruit

and veg were (and are) available in local markets every day of the week (like the Obstmarkt in Boyen), where bakers like the Franyiskanerbackerei bake wonderful bread on the premises every day and where butchers (if one must eat meat!) supply quality meat from proven provenance in that the butcher knows the farmer from which it stems.

Here the reverse is true, although I remark with applause that there are now some 300 farm shops in the country. In our case, if we don't circumnavigate Crawley by car to get supplies from Sainsbury's, we have to drive at least 20 minutes to find a reliable butcher – which ain't no picnic as I'm disabled and am, anyway, a fierce opponent of the motor-car, which makes me a reluctant hypocrite as well.

Brian Wright

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Crawley RH10 6PS*

AMAZING!

That incident in the church is something which really shook me – that so many passions could have been aroused by such a reasonable and measured address on the subject of the terrorist attacks in a global

and moral perspective was absolutely amazing.

I enjoyed the Radical Consultation and found it extremely stimulating, particularly the globalisation workshop. Let's hope we can get something going.

Elizabeth Nathaniels

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Sussex TN37 6DN*

RADCON 2

The Radical Consultation was one of the best meetings that I have attended. It was very well organised and businesslike, with a serious intention. I welcomed the emphasis on the global dimension, the required response by ordinary people and the intention to achieve a significant outcome.

One of the best ideas was the availability of specialist papers beforehand. This helped to overcome a problem of a surfeit of books, many of which are overlong and lacking a summary. This was the first meeting I have been to which provided for lengthy discussions on one topic with a specialist and other interested people. This gave the time necessary to think, learn and contribute, and provided many useful conclusions.

I should like to suggest that what we lack is a comprehensive and practical alternative strategy, which can act as a focus for new ideas and show people that a different society is possible, especially in the event of a future crisis. Such a strategy would contain:

1. Policies for the global market system, especially in response to strategic causes of social, environmental, economic and resource problems, resulting from the free market.
2. Statements on the internal situations in

the US, Russia, Japan, China, Latin America, South-East Asia, Africa, EU and UK.

3. Policies for sustainable development, especially:

- food production and supply;
- countryside and wildlife;
- transport;
- energy;
- urban quality;
- poverty;
- money/exchange systems;
- alternative economy.

I should very much like to continue to be involved in the Radical Consultation working group but I am not an administrator or organiser. My background is more technical – in geography, town planning, urban design and community development in local government. If I can make a contribution I shall be very happy to do so.

Derek Fisher

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BALANCE SHEET

I very much appreciated and agreed with your piece 'Terrorism in the Country of the Blind' (FWR No. 111). In respect of America's pretended moral position it occurs to me that an interesting project would be a balance sheet of murder, mayhem and destruction during the last 50 years. On one side America and its allies and on the other its various opponents.

Afghanistan? It's my money and my government that's doing it. I am bombing them! I am appalled, horrified, and very, very angry. America's present behaviour alone would justify its nomination as the 'Great Satan'. In one respect I do agree with our governments, namely, this is not a

Christian crusade.

September 11th handed it to America and its global corporate interests on a plate. Now they can consolidate power and secure oil interests in the Middle East and, as I am sure they will, clamp down on dissent such as displayed in Seattle. I had hoped that global capitalism might have imploded under the weight of its own engorged mass, but alas! It now invigorates itself doing the one thing it does best, bombing people.

Alan Turner

10 Rathcoole Gardens, London N8 9NB

WHY NOT?

In a speech on October 9 Tony Blair said, 'America and Europe will have to commit themselves to a long-term Marshall Plan-style strategy for the area'. In response, a few days later, six eminent Afghanistan academics, representing various important Afghan associations, came out in support of the idea.

Those two initiatives correspond to the experience in the Balkans where the EC (on Blair and Chris Patten's initiative) insisted on what they called 'a Marshall Plan for the region'. I believe it was largely this Reconstruction Plan that enabled and encouraged the Serbian government to send former Prime Minister Milosovic and others to the International Court at the Hague. Without that goodwill and consequently the support of the Serbian people, this ideal would not have been possible.

Why, I want to know, cannot something similar be done for Afghanistan? Why not stop the war immediately and announce our willingness to implement the splendid vision that Blair announced on October 9?

Why wait until after the war when it will be much more expensive and probably more difficult politically?

Ted Dunn

77 Hungerdown Lane, Lawford, Manningtree, Essex CO11 2LX

LAW

Terrorism is a crime against humanity and sanctions and reprisals are the subject of international law, and cannot be resolved by further acts of terrorism.

Diana Schumacher

Church House, Church Lane, Godstone, Surrey RH9 8BW

POWER ABUSE

Although the foot and mouth outbreak seems to have burnt itself out, thank goodness, the government is now using the reports of the fighting in Afghanistan to hide news of its latest misuse of power. Alleging that it was the attempts of some stockowners to protect their animals from its slaughter policy, rather than the inefficiency of so much of the actual killing and the disposal of carcasses, which was responsible for the spread and duration of the outbreak, they are proposing powers to kill anyone's animals without giving their owners any right of challenge.

Most informed opinion is agreed on the desirability of encouraging those extensive systems of livestock farming which rely on our rare breeds, most of which have been preserved by dedicated individuals, usually at great expense to themselves. It would take just one more outbreak of any disease to which the draconian slaughter policy was applied to exterminate many, or even most, of them. What can be done about this abuse of power which is to be applied with-

out the need to produce any evidence of the need for it or of its effectiveness?

Angela Bates

*The Manor House, North Witham, Grantham,
Lincs NG33 5LH*

A CURSE?

You and all your contributors draw up and expound idealistic plans. Neither you nor they pay any attention to the human beings who have to carry them out and who have proved themselves over the centuries, with a few worthy exceptions, to be a curse on the face of the earth. Who is going to enforce the 'Sale' vision on a greedy, ignorant and short sighted population? People who, for instance are both willing and capable of making and dropping cluster bombs?

You must face it. There is no answer to the human problem, most humans are by nature self exterminatory. How do you stop pigs pushing and fighting at the trough? Why did Blair, god damn him, need to scrap every former Old Labour principle in order to get elected? Do you remember Michael Foot's 1983 election manifesto being described as the 'longest suicide note in history'?

P.S. Did Sale get here by sailing or rowing boat?

Howard Cheney

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Warwickshire CV36 5EJ*

There are over 240 thousand registered charities in the UK, many, if not most, run by voluntary workers and supported by millions of people. Would it perhaps be preferable to ask how ordinary people can gain control of the forces which perpetrate so much unwanted horror in their lives? More especially, how people can control media forces, especially TV, which daily seeks to saturate their consciousness with a gospel of

greed and which seeks to blanket the ordinary decencies of human nature with every kind of moral excess and depravity? Ed.

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL INVENTION

How impressed I am by your editorial and the article by Sir Julian Rose (FWR No. 111). They both have more sense in them than anything else I have read. I like two little items in Fourth World Spectator: 'If we tolerate ugliness, as everywhere today we do, it means there is something ugly in ourselves'; and 'A principle is a lazy-minded man's device for saving himself the trouble of making up his own mind on a particular issue'.

With very good wishes for your struggle on all fronts. How I miss Nicholas [Albery]. I sometimes think how ironic it is that the four of us who formed that first ISI committee way back in the 80s – the two Nicholases, the man who thought up and started Voluntary Services Overseas (Alec Dickinson) and myself, I am the only survivor – and I am 84! However, there are some new faces coming along and we have our AGM at the House of Lords on December 19.

Margaret Chisman

The Bungalow, Nr Station, Tring, Herts HP23 5QX

CORRECTION

Sorry to notice that the wrong e-mail address was again published at the end of my article/speech in Fourth World Review.

The correct address is:
jrose.hardwickestate@talk21.com

Sir Julian Rose

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When sending e-mail please include your postal address. E-mail is fine if you have one of those screen things, but most people in the world still can't afford a toothbrush.

NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

I hereby resolve that before I open my income tax form, before I pay my gas bill or any other bill, before I switch on the TV, or feed the cat, or blow my nose or even make my will (unless FWR features therein), I will develop a proper sense of priorities by realising that FOURTH WORLD REVIEW is the most important, dynamic, invigorating, penetrating, relevant journal in the world, one which cannot continue without my own generous support and that I will at once pay my subscription for 2002.

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BOOKS

TIMELESS SIMPLICITY, by John Lane. GREEN BOOKS. £8.95/\$12.95. ISBN 1-903998-00-X.

 *Reviewed by John Papworth*


IF there is a gap in the universal literature, which includes the scriptures of all the great systems (if they may be termed as such) of religious belief of the ages, down to the flood that now pours off the presses, stimulated no doubt by a global crisis which has erupted from a failure to heed them, it is a failure to come to grips with the nitty gritty of political and economic problems which now dominate our lives.

John Lane makes no attempt to fill, or even reduce, this gap and any attempts which fail to do so tend to fall into a bracket of 'ifonlyism'. If only people would do or be this, that or the other, how different, how much better, everything would be. Nevertheless, if the nitty gritty is tackled and if its numerous problems, especially at the theoretical level, are resolved, there remains the consideration that nothing at all can be of any consequence, however human-scale or democratically ordained, or can reconcile us to

the needs of a decent life in a decently structured society which ignores the fundamental imperatives of the need to live by a decent set of values.

If we accept the pernicious message of mass advertising, that we need to live only for the moment of instant gratification of consumerist appetites, there is no hope for a decent world – every age needs to rewrite the message in its own terms, and John Lane, in a short work, does a really splendid job. We do need to be reminded of the ultimate verities which alone make sense of life and its problems and I do not think anyone can read this book without feeling more enlightened and more aware of how we need to live our lives if the present horror of the time is to be dispelled.

WHERE DIVISION ENDS: ON FEELING AT HOME IN CHAOS, by Maurice Ash. GREEN BOOKS, 2001. £7.95. ISBN 1-903998-06-9

 *Reviewed by Dr Ed P Echlin*

THIS is a challenging collection of previously published essays arranged thematically. Ash champions holism, which under-




stands humanity as within, and not above, the earth community, versus the dualism, which separates the human thinker from the rest of the earth community. Dualism results from Descartes, and the subjective self of modernity. Ash draws heavily from the later Wittgenstein, a leading philosopher of the last century, fascinated with human language and its relationship to our knowledge.

Ash makes good points, such as, the fallacy of positing 'the environment' or 'nature' as entities apart from persons. He endorses the principle of subsidiarity, as has Catholic social teaching. Interestingly he thinks world views which integrate people with the earth are conducive to small-scale farming versus massive agribusiness. He thinks Margaret Thatcher's shocking 'green speech' a turning point, but fails to notice how quickly the Tories (and indeed she!), and the other two grey parties buried it. Politicians prefer to distract people with schools, health, and the economy (which Ash also indicts as a false entity), while soil erodes and waters rise.

I have some hesitations. There is surprisingly no mention of Fergus Kerr's impressive book, *Theology After Wittgenstein*. While I agree that woolly, earth literacy leaves earth care to the tame 'stewardship' model, I would insist that genuine Christian soteriology (salvation) includes the whole earth, with the human component as a servant sovereign in the Creator's garden. Perhaps it's our different vintages and training, but I find some agreed 'dogma' not a 'tyrant', but a whitethorn hedge showing me where I can farm and garden. Doctrine helps me watch my language about God. A good read, although an unimpressive foreword by Satish Kumar shows rather less comprehension that does Ash.

CLIMATE CHANGE — TIME TO ACT. *Ecologist Report*, Nov 2001. £3.50 plus p+p. THINK PUBLISHING, 120 Wilton Rd, London, SW1V 1JZ.

 *Reviewed by John Papworth*

WHERE would we be without *The Ecologist*? Here is the latest of its superb series of special reports, this one on global warming and as urgent as a fire alarm. One problem is that 'global warming' does tend to sound soporific; nice and cosy, comforting and not something to be unduly worried about. It is only when you begin to absorb the detail (and this report is packed with a breathtaking range of it) that your hair starts to stand on end: what the politicians are deciding (or not deciding), why the icecaps are disappearing, what causes it and what happens when they do, the hanky panky of oil and logging interests, why the economists, as usual, are looking through the wrong end of a telescope, why people want to believe all is well and there is no need to worry, why concern for ever-rising consumption standards is akin to worrying about the colour of your wallpaper when you have no inkling the house is on fire, why a few decades from now millions, especially in coastal cities and plains, will either be dead from drowning or starving.


And perhaps so our hair should stand on end. We seem to have created a lifestyle in which human existence is a form of planetary cancer. The crisis litany of an utterly unsustainable explosion in human numbers, the multiple assaults on our natural life support systems, the gross and massive squandering of the planet's finite resources (posterity's heritage temporarily in our keeping), the squalid degradation of human cultures and social structures, they all constitute a nuclear cluster bomb hovering over human destiny.

And the time to act is not tomorrow, not after the next election, but now, now, now, if only because some who know the score are suggesting it may already be too late. Well, let us prove them wrong, especially as, of all the man-generated perils confronting us, global over-warming is, as Teddy Goldsmith in a final chapter explains, the one most likely to do us.

I don't know if it will help to lobby the political people, since they seem, like the rest of the pocket and stomach brigade, to be as myopically focussed on the colour of the wallpaper as anyone, but there is an excellent DIY section, by Simon Retallach, replete with details of a whole range of advisory bodies to help you to put your own house in environmental order, so do give it all a whirl.

But nothing much will change unless the general consciousness changes, until we realise that all of us, when we drive cars, switch on dishwashers, eat non-local food, shop at supermarkets, buy newspapers running to hundreds of pages and so on, are guilty of global ecological terrorism. And this report, pushed around, will do as much as anything to affect that change. Does your local library have a copy? And what about your local school library? And your neighbours? Your friends? What about a special house party to promote it? Whilst there is time...

GO MAD! A HANDBOOK OF 365 WAYS TO HELP SAVE THE PLANET, edited and compiled by *The Ecologist Report*. Cartoons by Stan Eales. ISBN 0-9541363-0-6. £3.99.


 Reviewed by John Papworth

DID you know that tin foil placed behind radiators increases the heat by reflecting it outwards instead of being absorbed in the walls? That dust on the coils at the back of

your fridge can increase energy consumption by 30%, that using bleach to kill germs in the loo makes treatment at sewage plants inordinately difficult? That tap water is as clean and as safe as bottled water? That the biggest single cause of cancer-related death in men between 15 and 35 is testicular cancer – which in the UK has trebled in the past 25 years and is still rising?

Neither did I, until I flicked through this pocket-sized handbook crammed with hundreds of suggestions on how you can live in ways which make less damaging impact on the planet and also on how you can avoid the current increasing dangers to your health and improve it. It is a landmark of Green wisdom; there should be a copy in every home.

THE BREAKDOWN OF NATIONS, by Leopold Kohr. ISBN 1-870098-98-6. £9.95.

 Reviewed by Canon Barney Milligan

We reviewed this important book in FWR 107. Here is another viewpoint courtesy of the New European.

THE theme and the frequently repeated refrain of this intriguing and winsome book is a plea for smallness, and a rejection of all that is big: in Kohr's thesis, size is the cancer which, as the diseases of the world, indeed is set fair to destroy society. The book first appeared in 1957, the year of the treaty of Rome, thus, ironically, sharing a birthday with the European Union. It made little stir at the time, for, at least in the view of the author, there was at that time a feverish search for bigness.

Europe is indeed one of the major leit-motifs of the book. And Kohr's arguments are refreshingly free of the stale 'europhile/euroseptic' style of today's debates. His approach to the concept of federation (a word which recurs often in a number of dif-

ferent contexts) and to subsidiarity (a word which does not figure but whose meaning is often a part of the argument) is unusually free from any kind of special pleading. True he would be very much against a European 'super state' (should such a project ever come on the agenda) and would probably be against the single currency. But in his plea for small nations – in Europe, Catalonia, for instance, and Brittany, Lombardy, Bavaria and Wales would figure among the small powers – Kohr is well aware of the need for some cohesion and 'federation'. And he sees Europe as that point of cohesion – but not of power. It is an idiosyncratic argument, distinct and different from the mainstream, yet holding to a strong principal thesis. So it should be required reading for those who are involved in the European project – for or against.

However, this a book which ranges far wider than the European scene, and embraces, and celebrates the joy and the value of smallness in a very wide field and with hugely various testimony, echoes, illustrations and applications. From Aristotle to de Toqueville, to Bernard Shaw; with plentiful comments from the poets, the scientists and the economists (Kohr himself being originally an academic economist); and with illustrations of great simplicity – travelling free on the bus for instance, or finding the best way to make sure children don't get their fists into the jam. But perhaps the most telling is the new style of mattress – 'a multitude of small independent springs' – as a sign of the most effective stable and happy form of human society.

It is not surprising to read in the acknowledgements that Leopold Kohr collected his ideas with a good deal of depen-

dence on the stimulation of conversation with his friends: (he speaks of one couple who bore with this at breakfast, lunch and dinner for five years!) for his style is conversational rather than didactic.

This style provides some personal examples which are most engaging. Born near Salzburg, Kohr doubts whether there would have been the same cultural achievements in his native country were it not for its own independent life as a prince bishopric: university, cathedral, and many other glories (not to mention Mozart – which, by the way, he doesn't!) would, according to the testimony of this Salzburgian, have been less likely by far. And the small Italian city states were certainly the seedbed for tremendous artistic achievements. But we may question whether there are not quite a number of exceptions to this rule, both of great art growing in big spaces and a certain paucity – it would be ungenerous to be precise – in some of the smaller communities.

Some of Kohr's comments on unity, while sometimes confusing, are also sharply and amusingly apt – 'only the totalitarian delights in oneness', or 'the hero in the age of bigness is not the scientist nor the artist nor the lover, but the organiser... and organisation is hell'. But the quest for unity in many fields (including, if I may add a personal word, the ecumenical field), while it is mistaken to seek uniformity or bigness, is still a worthwhile and important task. As a good Jew, Kohr would, I am sure, have been glad to recite the psalm 'Behold how good and joyful thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment that ran down even to Aaron's beard and to the skirts of his clothing.' And Kohr's wish to see an effective global instrument

in the United Nations is evidence enough that his dislike of oneness is a dislike of bigness, not a dismissal of the global dimension: his quarrel is with the built-in dominance of the big players in the Security Council. The oecumene and the UN are both alike concerned with 'the whole inhabited earth'.

Perhaps we may also ask for more precision as to the use of the word 'nation'. The usual definition of the word is a community of people who share territory, history, culture and language. They may or they may not be a 'state' – which generally implies a political unit with flag, currency, army, etc. It is the coming together of the two at the end of the middle ages to form the 'nation state' which has dominated modern European history. Many would hold that this construct was an aberration which led to conflict, violence and devastation: we may assume that this would have been the view of Leopold Kohr. It would have made

for a less snappy title: but the theme of the book is the breakdown of nations states rather than the breakdown of nation: although, to be sure, there could be a subtitle – the birth or rebirth of the smaller, authentic, nation.

In brief, this is a book to simulate and tease. With its strong and eloquent theme applied in many fields and its intriguing questioning of many common assumptions, it was a wise idea to reissue it not only in 1986 but also six years after Kohr's death, in 2001. The only pity is that we cannot have his comments on the demise of the USSR, a Europe now no longer divided, and the end of the bipolar world; the increasingly significant fact of that many sided word 'globalisation'; and, of course, the events of September 11 and its consequences. That must doubtless be left to those who follow. In the meantime this engaging book raises many of the right questions. ■

Copies of the following documents are available:

John Papworth — *Defence Statement to Swindon Magistrates* £2/\$4
John Papworth — *An Aborted Sermon* £2/\$4

Common Sense — a booklet edited by Peter Etherden, £5/\$10
 with contributions from **John Papworth**,
Dr Aidan Rankin and **Kirkpatrick Sale**.

Includes:

- ◆ Charter of Real Communities;
- ◆ Charter of Real Nations;
- ◆ The Global Crisis, Local Opportunities; and
- ◆ The Radical Declaration



All available from Fourth World Review,
 The Close, 26 High Street, Purton, Wiltshire SN5 4AE

MAGAZINES: **THE PAPWORTH AWARDS** **FOR THE BEST OF 2001**

Next to my desk is a large black plastic builders' receptacle. Every month it is full of journals I receive from the large number of radical, reform or protest movements around the world. Many of them, one has to say, are so tedious as to bore the tail feathers off a toucan, with contents as predictable as a postman (before privatisation). There really is a need not only to bang the drum on a particular great cause but to relate it to the wider currents which are sweeping us all along if we are to have any effect. So here are my award winners for 2001.

THE ECOLOGIST: top of the list, even though its habitual presentation tends to suggest a pretty girl who insists on wearing too many obstructive clothes, but its pages are packed with vividly written and highly imaginative items which often range far beyond immediate ecological concerns, with an eye on globalisation, 'language', 'terrorism', the menace of 'Europe' and much else. It is very much the intelligent person's guide to what is actually happening to our tormented planet and an absolute must for anyone who wants to be assured of being even moderately well-informed.

Ecologist £3.50 bi-monthly, Unit 18, Chelsea Wharf, 15 Lots Road, London, SW10 0QJ. Tel: 0207 351 3578; e-mail sally@theecologist.org; website: www.theecologist.org

THE ORGANIC LIVING ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER: Only two foolscap pages of typewritten stuff on both sides, now in its 30th year, and alive with important snippets of what's what on health matters and what the Dr Faustus's of the medical world are up to with their general approach of 'up

yours', plus book reviews and quotes. Highly readable and with the blessed gift of brevity.

Organic Living, bi-monthly, £5 annually. St Mary's Villa, Hanley Swan, Worcs, WR8 0EA.

PEACE NEWS: The UK's (is it still the UK?) long-standing pacifist organ occupies the high moral ground on non-violence and anti-war activism. In its time it has metamorphosed from an energetic, broad-based campaigning weekly into its current quarterly format. Actually its traditional, somewhat predictable focus has tended to make it a runner in the boring stakes and it has only just crept in here with its recent issues; the latest being a quite superb one on prison life which makes it required reading. It does not provide any final answers to the problems of criminality – perhaps there are none – and it tends to miss out on the political/economic dimension, but first-rate probing and reporting make it a must.

Quarterly, £2.50. 5 Caledonian Road, London, N1 9DY. Tel: 0207 278 3344; e-mail: peacenews@gn.apc.org; website: www.gn.apc.org/peacenews

ADBUSTERS: The journal of the mental environment. It comes from a Canadian stable and focuses on an area which gets far too little attention – the toxic effects of advertising and of the media on our general outlook and attitudes. Each bi-monthly issue is a revelation of what the ad boys and power freaks are doing to our minds and in

terms of design and presentation it is streets ahead of anything anywhere; so it is not only a mind-riveting read but a joy just to handle.

Adbusters Media, 1243 West 7th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, V6H 1B7, Canada. Tel: (604) 736 9401; e-mail: adbusters@adbusters.org; website: www.adbusters.org

TOE-NOTE: It is sad to have to report that all the above winners, like most of the alternative media organs, continue to publish Readers' Letters anonymously by failing to publish the address of the source, with apparent obliviousness of the depersonalisation involved. 'Joe Pitt, Cardiff' will mean nothing to most readers, especially since the address of a correspondent becomes an essential element in his or her identity when letters are published. There really is enough corporation and over-centralised government-inspired anonymity in our lives without gratuitously adding to it. The mere existence of a mass media is an attack on individuality and personhood, a force which isolates and dis-empowers us and which makes the need for contact and networking, which the publication of the full address helps enormously to facilitate, all the more urgent. In half a century or more of editing radical journals I have never been asked to withhold a reader correspondent's address and nothing, when asked, is easier than to comply. To your tents O Israel!

THE KNIGHTS OF GAIA

John Seymour

Purpose:	To save the world
Organisation:	None whatsoever
Rules:	Each Knight makes up his or her own
People qualified to become Knights:	Everyone, anywhere
How to become a Knight:	Make the vow aloud in front of at least one other person.

The Vow: "I declare that all life is sacred. I vow to dedicate my own life henceforth to defending, cherishing and protecting life on Earth. I hereby declare war on all enemies of life on Earth and I hereby vow to conduct an unremitting fight against them. I will behave with true knightly courtesy to all my sister and brother Knights and give them what aid and succour they need."

Policy: 1. There will be no central organisation. 2. Each local group of knights shall form their local community and arrange to meet locally at regular intervals to plan their campaigns against the enemies of life. It will be the duty of each group to ensure that any atrocity against life in its area be attacked and destroyed, slaughter of endangered species, 'GM' (Genetically mutilated) trials etc. The need to establish national journals of the Knights, or even a world one to keep Knights in touch with each other is evident.

WE WILL SAVE THE WORLD!



FOURTH WORLD SPECTATOR

I WENT ALONG to the village war memorial on November 11 and whilst waiting for the traditional two minutes silence at 11am I wondered how many of the names of those inscribed on it had relatives still in the village.

There were several doubles of the same name, indicating perhaps brothers, or father and son, whilst one family had lost three members. The carnage of that first world war was all the more dreadful for its sheer pointlessness. 'Germany' had only become a single state a generation earlier and its readiness to make war was due not to any innate 'German' bellicosity but, like Britain's, to the scale and the scope of its power. That was the real lesson of that war: power enlarged to a scale making it beyond citizen control and hence beyond citizen moral criteria so that young men who have no real quarrel with each other are trained to butcher one another for years on end! It is a lesson we will go on repeating as long as we refuse to learn it. Half a dozen elderly

men from The British Legion stood in a group across the road and only came into the well-kept enclosure a moment or so before the silence, one man carried a trumpet and proceeded to play *The Last Post*. At the end of the silence he blew some more notes and then they left without a word. What disquieted me most about those men was how unwell they all looked, unconscious victims no doubt of a daily diet of supermarket chemicals masquerading as food.

ROBIN CAME FOR LUNCH, an old neighbour who now lives in Whiteway Colony near Stroud. The colony was founded by a group of ardent anarchists in Victorian times who believed in freedom and reputedly went in for gardening, (organic of course), sex, handicrafts, vegetarianism, nudity and philosophical speculation. What happened to the colony is instructive. The land was held in common by its members, but people built and, more important, owned, their own homes. Question: When any present

owner moved and sold up, who should decide on who the new owner would be, who would then *ipso facto* become a member of the community? The former owner, or the community? Most members, realising they might one day also wish to sell their houses, opted for the owner's right to determine the matter. The upshot was the infiltration of new members whose affiliation to the community ideology was about as fervent as that of a geriatric tadpole. Thus, with the attrition of age, death and the ceaseless TV and tabloid bombardment of consumerist values, especially on the young, the community expresses about as much anarchist spirit as a retired royal lady-in-waiting. There must be a moral to that decline somewhere which needs to be digested, especially since it is matched by almost every attempt to found such communities of which I have ever heard.

At one stage of our exchange Robin suggested I was being rather too polemical in my diatribes against 'Europe'. Wasn't talking of the 'europlot' rather schoolboyish language? And look at the way 'Europe' is promoting human rights! Was it not impressive that if people in Britain were denied justice they could now obtain it in a 'European' court? I could only marvel at this fruit of European tax-payer funded brain-washing, and of course Robin is by no means alone, he is one of millions who have been seduced by this skilfully deployed art of mass persuasion which leaves its victims gasping with such admiration for the ornamentation of the chalice they have no wit left to grasp the extent to which its contents are poisoned. But there we are.

Robin wanted to know about my friendship with R.H. Tawney in connection with a village history he is writing. Tawney was

easily one of the most remarkable men I have ever met. Despite his public-school and university education he enlisted in the first world war as a private, was shot in the stomach and lay in the Flanders mud for two days before he managed to clutch the foot of a sergeant leading a burial party and who responded with, 'Cor, this bugger's alive!' The Archbishop of Canterbury visited him in the field hospital and said to the matron, 'Look after him. He is the greatest man in England.' It says something of the class distinctions of the time that afterwards the matron indignantly rebuked him with, 'Mr Tawney, why didn't you tell me you was a gentleman?'

With his wife Jeanette (the sister of Lord Beveridge) he visited China and his book, *Land and Labour in China* is a little known classic which reads even more arrestingly after three quarters of a century. Jeanette was a great collector and was omnivorous in her purchases of Chinese antiques. The editor of *The New Statesman* declared Tawney had written the deservedly renowned analysis of the period, *The Acquisitive Society* but that Mrs Tawney was its embodiment. On their return to England Jeanette discovered most of her purchases had been made in Birmingham.

JERRY LEVINE was a dynamic bundle of energy with pronounced views on almost everything within his range – and even on some beyond. As well as being an ardent supporter of *FWR* he was also, as I discovered as his guest in New York, a consummate gastronome, a bibliophile and one who lived with passion for great causes. I mourned his premature passing some years back from prostate cancer and was delighted when his daughter and her hus-

band came for a weekend. It was actually quite a large week-end party and at one time most of the men went off to a pub and I came under fire from Marie for my views on the woman's movement. I was trying to say that men had created a male institutional structure to satisfy the needs of the male ego, and that women often sought to compete in this male world at the expense of their femininity. It is men who have constantly belittled and downgraded the world of the small, the local, the moral, the real and the beautiful whereas if women would seek to reverse that thrust they would not only realise themselves but would change the world in ways men generally were incapable of touching. Marie was sceptical of her dad's views and insistent he just wanted women to make pots of jam, thereby echoing the male measure of that useful activity and all that goes with it. She seemed unimpressed when I pointed out that all nearly all worthwhile village social concerns, especially voluntary ones, were run by women, but I think Jan, Gerry's daughter, was more receptive, as indeed was another guest, a mother who had come with her three-year-old son Rufus. When I saw Marie seemed to be outnumbered three to one I felt tempted to change sides. Incidentally, despite her frequent put down references to it, Marie has never made a pot of jam in her life whereas I make dozens every summer.

I can't change topics without a reference to Rufus, quite the most outgoing and inquisitive tot I have ever encountered. He was tired on arrival and not his usual alert-minded self, so I sought to divert him on his mother's lap by bringing in Ezra. The latter really belongs to Marie and is a doctored, sedate, fluffy, ginger-haired sort of Persian who views the world with the lofty disdain

of a Chinese emperor. The two living creatures eyed each other warily but appeared otherwise reluctant to make any further acquaintance. I was up next day before the other seven members of the household and quietly scribbling at my desk when I received a thump on my back which frightened me not inconsiderably (since I last wrote here thieves have again entered my house and this time they stole all my computer equipment. Fortunately a neighbour alerted me and I alerted the police who recovered it from under a hedge awaiting transport on a dark night. The thieves had covered it with clothing to protect it from the rain and the clothing is now being subjected to DNA testing). I jumped round to find this mischievous imp grinning from ear to ear as though he had just succeeded in single-handedly rowing across the Atlantic. Well, that was the end of work, or at least my work. I gave him a slice of my home-made bread and was about to spread some of my damson jam on it when with imperative insistence he said, 'Let me do it.' So I did. Great mistake. Don't ever let small boys loose with a pot of crimson coloured jam. In no time it was all over his face, his vest (fortunately his only garment), his hands, my hands, the plate, the table and, by some seeming miracle, some was also on the bread. He nibbled half of it and then dropped the rest on the carpet. I then carried him upstairs to his sleeping mum. But at every door or cupboard we passed he wanted to know 'What's in there?' so I opened each in turn. One cupboard contained some priestly vestments. 'What are they?' he wanted to know, but how do you explain that to a three-year-old?

For the rest of the day he followed me around whenever he could. As I cooked din-

ner he would demand to know with imperious insistence, 'What are you doing?' and I would have to explain about chopping vegetables, making a sauce or basting a joint what it was all about. I think what impressed me so strongly about Rufus was his cheerful, uninhibited openness and friendliness, his joy of just being in the company of others, his utter fearlessness and his readiness to accept others as friends. It was as though he had always found the world a marvellous place and that there was not a shadow of a doubt in his young mind that he always would. And I am sure the source of all this was his lovely young mother. I noticed she always spoke to him as one adult to another on a basis of warm, courteous, easy-going equality. 'Rufus please come now and have your dinner.' The tone of voice contained none of that sense of threat that if Rufus did not come some unpleasant consequence might ensue, as mummy was authority incarnate and must be obeyed because she was the boss and that was that. The contrast with the fate of another child I witnessed at a shopping centre a few days earlier could not have been greater. The mother was thirtyish, pale, fat, flabby and had a fag drooping from her lips as she thrust her evidently distressed child into a pushchair and strapped him in. The child was screaming non-stop with anger as

he struggled to be free. 'Will you shut up', yelled the mother as she continued to gossip with another woman. She then walked on in my direction, the child's screams continuing and his face almost blue from exertion. I longed to pick the kid up and to cuddle and comfort him and I said to the mother, 'Don't you think your little boy wants something?' She snarled at me, 'e's just 'avin one of his tantrums.' One of them! I wondered what the kid would be like at sixteen and I have to confess the whole incident left me profoundly depressed.

After Rufus and his mum had left I discovered my filing cabinet was locked and only after a frantic search found the key wedged between books lying on the floor. Later still I found he had been at the TV controls, switching the entire works to a non-existent video arrangement from which I was unable to exit. During dinner he had crawled under the table and, with the deft, unobtrusive aplomb of a professional conjuror, managed to untie all the men's shoelaces. Later still I found the controls of the washing machine, set at a height suitable for an infant to practice piano scales, were all awry, rendering it unworkable. Well, I thought, if this is Rufus at three what will he be like at six? I silently commiserated with his lovely mum, but after they had left, how I missed him!

What is the meaning of democracy, freedom, human dignity, standards of living, self realisation, fulfillment? Is it a matter of goods, or of people? Of course it is a matter of people. But people can be themselves only in small comprehensible groups. Therefore we must learn to think in terms of an articulated structure than can cope with a multiplicity of small-scale units. If economic thinking cannot grasp this it is useless. If it cannot get beyond its vast abstractions, the national income, the rate of growth, capital/output ratio, input-output analysis, labour mobility, capital accumulation; if it cannot get beyond all this and make contact with the human realities of poverty frustration, alienation, despair, breakdown, crime, escapism, stress, congestion, ugliness, and spiritual death, then let us scrap economics and start afresh.

E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*

INNOVATIVE IDEAS TO COMBAT URBAN ISOLATION

On 6 November, guests at the World's Greatest Ideas Party at the Institute for Social Inventions HQ stormed their brains for 'Innovative Ways to Combat Urban Isolation'.

Here are some of the more inspiring, wacky and wonderful ideas to have emerged:

- ◆ At least two TV-free nights every week to get people out and about.
- ◆ Communal gardening plots for each street.
- ◆ Separate carriages on underground trains for: massage, tea, singing and romance.
- ◆ People to be given beer vouchers that can only be used in their local pub.
- ◆ Buskers should be allowed everywhere – on a licensed scheme.
- ◆ Subsidised bicycles to encourage people to live local lives.
- ◆ Local communal areas such as supermarkets to house 'libraries without rules'.
- ◆ Start a 'chain letter' of good turns: do two good turns a week to someone within walking distance, who then has to do two more in return – to a different person.
- ◆ Everyone to get trained in a trade for a week by a local craftsman.
- ◆ Men and women to swap roles in the community for one day each year.
- ◆ Arrange random power cuts to bring people together, away from the TV, PC etc.
- ◆ Arrange meeting parties for those with the same surname.
- ◆ Each household to display a work of art by someone in their street.
- ◆ Sponsor a bus seat: become a patron of local public transport.
- ◆ Start a feud with a local village – guaranteed to bring your own community together.
- ◆ Everyone to have at least one close friend from each decade.
- ◆ Blank billboards for advertising the joys and curiosities of your community.
- ◆ Deface existing commercial advertising – but only in a creative and beautiful way.
- ◆ Advertising hoardings to be replaced by artwork from local schoolchildren.

With acknowledgements to *Green Events*. The Institute of Social Inventions is being renamed 'The Nicholas Albery Foundation' in honour of its founder.

Fourth World News



Swissair went bust, partly because a Swiss bank dallied for three days with government bailout money! • **Peter Stevenson**, Headmaster of a primary school in **Exmouth**, Devon, is being rebuked by political leaders for telling his pupils the war in Afghanistan is wrong. He was accused of bringing politics into the classroom. Presumably to keep politics out he would have had to say the war was OK. • At least 35 people have been killed in **Kashmir** when Pakistani guerrillas attacked an Indian army camp. • 60% of **UK** voters now reject joining the euro and wish to keep the pound. • **Arab** sheikhdoms have just ordered 70 Airbus planes, each able to carry 550 passengers and costing \$415 million. • There are 438 **nuclear reactors** worldwide. • **So far** 52,000 qualified teachers in the **UK** have left the profession in 2001. • In **Texas** there are more than 250 men and women on death row awaiting execution. • The Home Office is secretly plotting to produce ID cards for all **British** citizens. • Only 10% of **US** citizens are reputed to have a passport for foreign travel. • A Saturday edition of the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper had 258 pages, *The Times* has 158 pages. When is this immoral waste of resources going to stop? • Breast Cancer is now the most common cancer in **Britain**. It causes nearly 40,000 deaths per year. • **Australia** destroys more native woodland and forest each year than all but six nations. • The **Archbishop of Canterbury** fully supports the war in Afghanistan. • The 19th Century is still riding high in **Gibraltar** where the British and Spanish governments are doing a deal on its future in blank opposition to the wishes of the people who live there. • It is rumoured the

different factions in **British** politics have gestated a debate in Afghanistan on whether the Muslim authorities should send a peace-keeping mission to the UK. • Between 50,000 and 100,000 people marched in **London** to protest the war in Afghanistan. The war continues. • A headline in *The Times* has astonished the world of finance by declaring, 'It pays to be wary of high yield investments.' Whoever would have thought it? • After renegeing on its promise not to build a fourth terminal at Heathrow, the **UK** has now renegeed on its promise not to build a fifth. • Organic food sales are rising faster in **Britain** than in any other European country, but thanks to the monopolistic market power of supermarket chains farmers are getting decreasing prices for their products. • Four police officers in **Johannesburg** have been imprisoned for using German Shepherd dogs to savage Mozambican immigrants as part of a 'training exercise'. • Al Gore, former **US** Vice-President, now has a new job with Metropolitan West Financial in Los Angeles. Whoever would have thought it? • Junior doctors in **France** went on strike in protest at their long working hours. • The **UK** Post Office is being systematically dismantled as special deliveries are being phased out and private firms are being given licences to 'compete' with it. • A **London** senior police officer has been rebuked for saying it was a waste of resources to pursue people who use cannabis, cocaine and Ecstasy. • A prominent **UK** political maverick named Tony Blair has declared he wants Britain to be part of 'EUrope'. • Maoist rebels in **Nepal** have killed hundreds of people. The King has declared a state of emergency. – SH

Fourth World News

