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# FOURTH WORLD REVIEW

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Human Spirit

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**JOHN PAPWORTH**

Tea with H.G. Wells



**KIRKPATRICK SALE**

Erectus Consciousness Part II

*Editorial:*

**A NEW START**

# FOURTH WORLD REVIEW

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## A NEW START

***MODERN HISTORY is a record of the failure of humankind to adopt a moral code which matches the immense perils that its own rapidly developing technologies have created; at heart it is a failure to adopt a code which would control its economic activity, for it is economic power which is the principle weapon the global destroyers are using.***

The business of trade and of getting and spending touches more nearly our core moral aspirations and perceptions than any other aspect of our lives with the exception of sex; but whereas sexual mores and a failure to adhere to them will deeply affect the personal lives of those involved, our economic behaviour has pronounced social effects, for good or ill, with global ramifications.

The itch for gain is one of our deepest and most pervasive propensities; our ability to feed, clothe and shelter ourselves extends to those near and dear to us, and in any society that has advanced from that of hunter gatherers to one of money systems and legally defined trading relationships, the need for that propensity to be subject to moral constraints that would ensure the supremacy of the social interest, to protect

the weak, to ensure just and fair terms and to restrain the excesses of the powerful, has always been manifest and manifested.

A key factor here is that of the legality of lending money to make profit by charging interest on the loan, which today is the standard banking procedure in nearly all countries. From early times, especially when economies were rooted directly in agriculture, it was seen as profoundly immoral that one man should gain from the needs and the labour of another without doing any labour to earn it.

Even more important was the realisation that once such a process was permitted, the power implicit in the mere successful accumulation of money through usury could come to dominate and control the social order. An awareness of this danger led the sacred writings of Jews, Christians and Muslims to condemn usury – and to continue to condemn it to this day.

Until the 16th century usury was not only regarded as immoral, it was also illegal in many countries. This was the case, at least in the Christian world, for fifteen hundred years – three-quarters of the entire span of Christian teaching.

The 16th century was a watershed in the matter; an influx of gold from the mis-

named 'New World' and significant improvements in the technology of navigation, leading to a rapid expansion of European trade, created political pressures to facilitate readier access to credit, and in the reign of the first Elizabeth the laws prohibiting usury were effectively countermanded.

The result was to unlock the floodgates to an orgy of avarice which proceeded to fulfil the worst apprehensions of the early authors of scripture. The social interest became subordinate to the power of money; politics ceased to control money, not least since money proceeded to control politics; and for several centuries this new power rampaged around the world, generating an industrial revolution which divorced man from work as a creator to being a mere attendant on machines and the imperatives of machine processes.

## Stripped Bare

It proceeded to mine the earth in the name of farming, to strip the earth of much of its precious forest cover in the name of trade, to exterminate thousands of other species of life on which its own survival depends, to gestate monstrous world wars which assailed the humanity of human identity and, by means of sophisticated advertising techniques employed on a mass scale, stripped men's souls bare of the meaning of nature, art, culture, beauty and of society itself.

It was a process not without its opponents; over the same time span men sought to conceive and apply a moral code which might control the monster and divert its excesses into socially benign channels. So that as Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* became the new Bible of the Western world,

replacing perhaps St Augustine's *City of God*, so socialists, communists, radicals, anarchists and others sought to apply their own favoured alternatives, be they Marx's *Das Kapital* or Rousseau's *Du Contract Social*.

They all at least realised that economic activity devoid of any decent moral aim was mere brigandage, but they failed, for the same reason that Adam Smith's doctrines failed. Smith's, it may be recalled, preached that the itch for gain, despite its dubious moral overtones, could be contained from its grosser excesses by the laws of a competitive market. He quite failed to perceive that the monster whose existence he was seeking to justify could cancel competition and come to control the market itself, which of course is what it has proceeded to do.

His error was to ignore the factor of scale, to ignore that whilst his doctrines might make sense in the operation of a village economy, (so long as the village imposed limits to the size of any enterprise, and thus enabling the element of competition to control prices, to say nothing of retaining the power to exercise its own decision-making independence), competition would disappear into the maws of monopolistic greed once those limits were breached, and any possibility of a decent moral order would simply go to the wall.

The opponents of Smith's doctrines made exactly the same error. Communism, or any variants of it, was one thing on a village scale (if villagers freely wanted it), but on a scale encompassing the lives of many millions it led to the grotesque horrors of Robespierre's guillotine and the infamous monstrousness of Stalin's Russia. It has also led to the spectacle of a socialist prime minister in Britain laying the foundations of a

new corporate capitalist state and giving full support to usury's brainchild, the creation of a corporate controlled federal Europe, all of course in the name of socialism.

Which is where we are today, confronting radicals of every shade with the challenge to promote an ethical basis to economic activity which will safeguard the environment, the natural riches of nature's bounty, the general workings of the social order and the integrity of the human personality.

## Wake-up Call

It is a challenge that is being meticulously ducked on every hand; instead of a broad movement of concerned people seeking to wrest the power that commerce and mass politics wield to perpetrate so much evil mischief from their hands and helping to direct it into sane localised community channels, where the ordinary decency of ordinary decent people is sovereign, we are effectively doing nothing. Who can fail to be rivetted by a passionate exposition of the need for peace, or for intermediate technology or organic farming, or the need to save the whales, or the rain forests, or to be converted to the need for recycling waste, or to any other of the concerns that engage so many 'alternative' organisations and publications?

But when are they going to wake up? We may concern ourselves to the end of time in ensuring the ship's store is stocked with nothing but organic food, that intermediate technology rules supreme in the engine room, that animal rights are scrupulously respected in eliminating rats and cockroaches, and that no part of the ship is without its particular massage equipment or meditation cabins, that everyone on board is fully aware of the inequities of the

ship's trading relations with others, but what sense of priorities prevails that enables all the good people engaged with these concerns to ignore that there is a hole below the water line and that the ship is sinking? Or that those in charge of the steering are heading for the rocks?

We are confronted with every kind of crisis and in every case an appropriate knee-jerk reaction from concerned people has been engendered; but a failure to focus on the extent to which these many crisis factors emerge from overlarge and overcentralised degrees of political and economic power now running amok and denying the power of the concerned citizen body to prevent them and their abuses is to make ourselves part of the problem rather than of its solution.

People differ widely in their views on the moral principles which should govern economic activity, and the days are over when we could assume a general concurrence with some broad overarching principles which require a powerful centralised structure to apply them and which lead only through the runnels of modern history to the insulting ineffabilities of 'New Labour'.

We have to trust ourselves and our own judgements in every local community wherever we live to make the moral decisions about economic matters which will enable life to flourish, and to insist on the local power to apply them in the confidence that others elsewhere will share our concerns and our perceptions.

We must have faith that this sharing will forge together to build a new civilisation, one which rejects the excesses of greed and which promotes a quest for the creative splendours of self-realisation through service. ■

## ERECTUS CONSCIOUSNESS:

### Part II: How We Might Still Survive

#### Kirkpatrick Sale

*Never has the impetus for radical change, despite the awesomeness of the clouds gathering over us, been so confused, divided, chaotic passive and ineffectual. What is lacking is any unifying conceptual approach in the kind of depth which might yield a coherent response; one which has the sort of integrity which could yield results any genuine overall radical conceptive thinking might achieve. This is the core of the concerns which these remarkable essays seek to express, the first of which appeared in our last issue (FWR 126).*

**I have been arguing that, for 98 per cent of our time on earth as the species *Homo*, we have lived with a perspective on the world that permitted an intimate integration with nature, in societies small, coherent, and harmonious, without overstressing or overpopulating immediate ecosystems, with a consciousness— what the English philosopher Owen Barfield called a sense of ‘original participation’ – that made us at one with our world.**

And so it is possible for us to do something like that again – I don’t mean to ‘go back’ to the time of the *Homo erectus*, but to open ourselves up to its understanding of our place on earth as just one more large mammalian species, depending on the rest of life for our comfort and success, and giving up our contemporary poisonous attitudes of ‘dominion over’ the natural world. And thus, possibly, avert the ecocidal calamity that those attitudes have led us to in the 21st Century.

I need not here belabour evidence for this attitude of dominance toward nature

coming into ancient civilizations everywhere from their two major predecessors – the bloody *Sapiens* culture of regularly hunting large animals and the agricultural culture of domesticating (enslaving?) plants and animals. Nor how they forged the attitude into philosophies that allowed humans to take more of the land and of its species regardless of increasing desertification and aridification, the downfall of all irrigation-based societies. Nor is it necessary to retell the experience of modern scientific civilization in ratcheting up these philosophies into an underlying ethos and equipping it with habits of thought and tools of power that have enabled us to extend our dominance over the globe with the force of a hundred unhalting hurricanes, determining life and death for all other species and systems we encounter.

But it is well to understand the simple truth that Western civilization has always defined itself in opposition to nature – as Freud said, civilization was necessary ‘to defend us against nature’, including our own – and to realise that this opposition is critical to the way the civilization views

itself and operates. What a terrible indictment, to have a culture that prides itself on its distance from the natural world and the natural cycles and rhythms, that regards it as its mission (in Francis Bacon's words) 'to conquer and subdue' nature with its indomitable technology, and that is built on the idea that nature has value only if it is harnessed and exploited for economic purpose: 'Nature, Mr. Allnut,' says the spinster on the *African Queen*, 'is what we have been placed on earth precisely to overcome.'

It might even be said that by the 21st century Western civilization's opposition to all that is not civilized and domesticated has been so successful that, in one sense, as critic Frederic Jameson has said, 'nature is gone for good'. By which he means that the instruments of advanced capitalism, including industrialism, commercialism, corporatism, financial markets, agribusiness, tourism, trade, media, advertising, all on an encompassing global scale, have caused, at least on the effective conceptual level, 'a radical eclipse of Nature itself'. Not only has nature been conquered and plundered and exploited for human ends, it has even been subsumed and cast aside by the dominant culture as an irrelevant image except in advertisements.

But the fact is that nature is not gone from our souls, no matter how much capitalist civilization has distorted and dismantled it or driven it from our daily sensibilities. Not only is there that two-million-year-old primal self within all of us, it is genetically encoded to understand and appreciate nature the way the Erectus self did, even though it sometimes seems to be buried under and stifled by the modern self. We evolved in a wilderness of extraordinary diversity where we lived in daily intimacy

with animal life and plant variety, upon which we depended completely and unbrokenly for survival, and that has only been reinforced by natural selection through 72,000 generations over the long millennia.

Hence under our modern veneer, and in spite of the multiple obfuscations of capitalist culture, we still have an innate need for connections to nature, we have an ineradicable appreciation of its flora and fauna, and we have the capacity and somewhere the felt ability to achieve a communion with beings other than ourselves and settings other than those we create. Edward Wilson, the Harvard biologist, has named this 'biophilia', and he says that it is 'the innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms... [that is] hereditary and hence part of ultimate human nature'.

It is upon this that a modern Erectus consciousness of nature can be built.

## **Benevolent force**

It would begin with a basic understanding that nature is good, just as the Mbuti in the Congo forest know. That seems simple enough a concept, but it is not one that our culture has fostered: we are taught to know that we have been expelled from the good world of the garden of Eden into the bad and fierce and wild one of nature – 'cursed is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life' – and we are told that it is our task to subdue it. It is true that in some societies at some times there have been some few who express appreciation for nature and revel in opportunities to see the mountains, hike the trails, raft the rivers, absorb the birdsongs and gaze on the gazelles, but that is not the same thing as a society-wide deep understanding of nature as a benevolent force

and the earth as a living, giving source of all life. Nor does it embody the Mbuti sense of daily life as a rich, full, easy, bountiful endowment of nature, rather than something that must be wrested from the world by human effort in a never-ending battle of drudgery and challenge and competition. Einstein thought it was a profound question of whether the universe was friendly or unfriendly – a grounded Erectus-guided soul would not wonder.

Then it might seek a thoroughgoing reintegration with nature, a conscious identity with it and its species, something very like the feeling of loss of self and ego, an at-one-with-the-world sensation, that comes when the right temporal lobe of the brain takes control during deep meditation, or when in Zen Buddhism the initiate is lost in the immediate moment and perceives, non-verbally, the law of interdependence. Psychologist Hans Loewald, like Carl Jung himself, has suggested that the 'quest for boundary loss, for the merger of Self and Other', is a fundamental human search, and it may be so because that is the 'interpenetration with the non-human world' the Erectus psyche seems to have known. This has certainly been the goal of some people in our civilization, defying the norm, people like the Welsh writer John Cowper Powys, who once asserted that

*We can restore, by means of our imaginative reason, that secret harmony with nature which beasts, birds and plant possess but which our civilization has done so much to eradicate from human feeling... It flows through us, stirred by unexpected little things, a magical rapport, bringing indescribable happiness between the solitary ego*

*and all that we behold on this green earth.*

One more aspect of the Erectus understanding of nature available to us is the essential wisdom of biocentrism, a way of coming to regard the human, as the ecologist Thomas Berry has put it, 'on the species level', as one more creature on the earth in essence no grander and greater than the rest, and at heart ultimately dependent upon them and their continuing healthy interactions for our very lives. We are so cocooned in our human-centeredness in most of our existence that this sort of humility seems well-nigh degrading, or juvenile, but it is of course the crucial element of a worldview that knows domination to be wrong and integration to be right. As Berry has phrased it:

*Our secular, rational, industrial society, with its amazing scientific insight and technological skills, has established the first radically anthropocentric society and has thereby broken the primary law of the universe, the law of the integrity of the universe, the law that every component member of the universe should be integral with every other member of the universe and that the primary norm of reality and of value is the universe community itself in its various forms of expression, especially as realized on the planet Earth.*

Or as the philosophers of the Deep Ecology movement have recently put it:

*The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves... independent of the usefulness of the*

*nonhuman world for human purposes. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.*

All life is sacred, say the Indians, including the stones and waters and clouds and the earth itself, and there is no hierarchy determining that humans are supreme and can dominate and direct the others. We have lived as if there were one, and now we must live another way. The Erectus way.

## **The Erectus Way**

It is not so esoteric or arcane, after all, the Erectus way. It is clear that a great many people now, as countless in the past, have a pretty clear understanding of what kind of attitude to the world would most likely benefit the human species and ensure the harmonious continuance of the rest of life. We need not find the models a million years in the past, for their ideas are available in one degree or another to us today.

In the tribal societies all over the world that have so far resisted Western civilization's fateful embrace and allowed the story of their ancient truths to be copied down. And in other aboriginal tribes, including many in North America., though compromised and corrupted by European conquest, who still have remnants who know the old ways and remember the ancestral teachings and honour them as well as they can. They have come a long way from their hunter-gatherer past, most of them, but they retain the fundamental lessons that they learned when they came through the wrenching experience of the period of

mammalian extinctions: that humans must step carefully on this earth, with respect for the lives of other species, careful to keep intact ecological integrity and what Aldo Leopold once called 'the web of interdependencies so intricate as to amaze'.

The six-nation Irokwa tribes of eastern North America, who know themselves as the Hau de no sau nee, spoke to the world more than 25 years ago, setting out the basic tenets of their culture. It is almost as if the Erectus bands were speaking:

*In the beginning, we were told that the human beings who walk about the Earth have been provided with all the things necessary for life. We were instructed to carry a love for one another, and to show a great respect for all the beings of this Earth. We are shown that our life exists with the tree life, that our well-being depends on the well-being of the Vegetable Life, that we are close relatives of the four-legged beings. In our ways, spiritual consciousness is the highest form of politics.*

*Ours is a Way of Life. We believe that all living things are spiritual beings. Spirits can be expressed as energy forms manifested in matter. A blade of grass is an energy form manifested in matter – grass matter. The spirit of the grass is that unseen force which produces the species of grass, and it is manifest to us in the form of real grass...*

*We believe that all things in the world were created by what the English language forces us to call*

*'Spiritual Beings', including one that we call the Great Creator. All things in this world belong to the Creator and the spirits of the world. We also believe that we are required to honour these beings, in respect to the gift of Life.*

*Our traditions were such that we were careful not to allow our populations to rise in numbers that would overtax the other forms of life. We practiced strict forms of conservation...*

The Hau de no sau nee have no concept of private property. This concept would be a contradiction to a people who believe that the Earth belongs to the Creator.

*Before the colonists came, we had no consciousness about a concept of commodities. Everything, even the things we make, belong to the Creators of Life and are to be returned ceremonially, and in reality, to the owners. Our people live a simple life, one unencumbered by the need of endless material commodities. The fact that their needs are few means that all the peoples' needs are easily met. It is also true that our means of distribution is an eminently fair process, one in which all of the people share in all the material wealth all of the time.*

*Ours was a wealthy society. No one suffered from want. All had the right to food, clothing, and shelter. All shared in the bounty of the spiritual ceremonies and the Natural World...*

*All in all, before the colonists came, ours was a beautiful and rewarding Way of Life.*

Or, on a different level, there are many strains in the worldwide environmental movement as it has developed over the last 50 years that have tried to enunciate, and in many cases achieve, a consciousness of nature quite at odds with the Western paradigm. (Not surprising, because what James Parks Morton of the Interfaith Center of New York has called the 'dawning ecological consciousness' is as he says 'the crown and climax' of the world's spirituality and has created 'the revolution in religion itself'.) There is, for example, a perspective that has been called 'the New Cosmology', a way of understanding the universe as an unfolding story of human and cosmic alignment. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry have tried to fashion the tenets of this idea, but in the end it comes down to a spiritual appreciation of the totality of life on earth and the realisation that the 'universe community' is made up of equally worthy beings. The concept crafted by British scientist James Lovelock in his Gaia Hypothesis, that the planet earth is literally alive, purposeful in some sense and self-controlling and self-regulating, fits into this cosmology neatly, and that too is a widely adopted idea within the environmental movement and beyond. It is really the old idea of the *anima mundi*, the soul of the earth, reified through science.

Other strains include the Deep Ecology followers already mentioned, who in a great number of books and articles (more than 1,000 genuine cited on Google) have articulated a profound ecological ideology that, as City of New York philosopher

Andrew McLaughlin sums it up, 'seeks a transformation of people and society, advocating the joys of an expanded sense of identification with nature'. Of a similar nature is the bioregional movement, centered in North America and with more than 120 affiliate groups, which advocates a decentralisation of political and economic life to the level of regions defined by nature (flora, fauna, hydrology, geology, etc.) rather than legislature, as, most frequently, watersheds and mountains. Explicitly biocentric, the movement has announced itself this way: 'Bioregionalism recognises, nurtures, sustains and celebrates our local connections with: land; plants and animals; rivers, lakes and oceans; air; families, friends and neighbours; community; native traditions; and traditional systems of production and trade.'

### **Equal partners**

Certainly some part of the modern animal rights movement is also biocentric in its assertion of moral rights for all animals, though not much of the debate has promoted the notion of humans being equal in status or value. In fact, at least a strong part of the movement operates from ideas of stewardship, arguing that since humans are the dominant species on earth it is our moral obligation as stewards, or managers, of it all to treat animals with kindness and decency; as if it weren't our domination that was the problem in the first place. Still, in its straightforward denunciation of 'speciesism' it begins to approach that consciousness that understands that 'all living beings are spiritual'.

And next, those who will take on civilization itself. ■

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## TEA WITH H.G. WELLS

John Papworth

***I WAS on wartime leave in London from my cookhouse duties in the RAF at Grantham. The noise from anti-aircraft guns in a nearby garden square was far more frightening than the bombs, and I was locked in a furious argument with the hostel warden about H.G. Wells.***

I rather tended to idolise Wells; I read his novels voraciously rather than comprehendingly and when on night shifts in the officers' mess I devoured his three basic textbooks – *The Science of Life*, the one on economics, and his *History of The World*. (I had given bacon and eggs in the early hours once to the Duke of Hamilton, who had just interviewed Hess in Scotland and was on his way to report to Churchill.)

Did I say 'idolise'? I was utterly enraptured with every word Wells wrote and swallowed his views like a convert to a new religion. But the hostel chap was dismissive, Wells was shallow, a passing fad, no real influence with anyone. But Wells' number was in the telephone book, a woman's voice wanted to know my business. I explained I was having a row about Wells and wanted to see for myself what he was like. Put this man through to me, said a gen-

tle and cultured voice and he, the great man himself, proceeded to invite me to tea. If I but knew it, it was the literary occasion of my life and, crassly enough, I took no notes. He lived at 13 Hanover Terrace, Regent's Park, a grandiose Regency crown property terrace house.

A wee bit on the portly side, not tall, vivid blue eyes that sparkled with intelligence, thinning hair combed sideways across a balding pate, a tweed suit and rather stylish house slippers. The subdued gravitas of his manner and his frequent sense of humour was utterly at odds with the reputation of a literary giant bent on demolishing all the old familiar gods and putting the god of science in their place; the brave new world would not be at its core a cathedral but a laboratory.

Whilst sitting by a coal fire in a large, well proportioned, well furnished, book-lined room, he mentioned that the honey we were spreading on our bread came from the farm of Rebecca West, a name I had not heard before, such was the measure of my literary ignorance. When I protested to him that my antagonist at the hostel had said he was just a journalist, he laughed outright and said, 'But that is what I am.' I recall lit-

tle else in that pleasant encounter between a world famous author and a semi-literate RAF cook whose head was ablaze with the former's ideas.

Now, 60 years later, I have just finished reading what must have been his last novel, *You Can't Be Too Careful*, published in 1941. In many ways it renders a summation of views on world affairs as seen by one of the most perceptive, gifted and original minds of his time in his account of the life and thinking of a very ordinary person against a background of far from ordinary events.

The first conclusion one draws is how hopelessly wrong Wells was in his world view. He was given to talking about 'our race' – the human race – and of its 'inevitable' destiny of worldwide political and economic unity. He wrote grandiosely of how modern inventions had 'abolished distance' and made the world 'a global village'.

He could see no future other than under a 'world government' and unwittingly he was expressing the limitations of the ruling socialist ideas of his time, making no allowance at all for the strength of commercial appetites and the extent to which they would dominate or devastate any international structures that might be built, as indeed they have done. His mind reached for the stars with no grasp of the importance of the small, the local, the moral and the resilience that must support any such dream.

And when one surveys his work, especially his journalism and his sociological writing, it is striking to see the extent to which he failed to note a single one of the crisis factors that now dominate modern life.

One can list at least five of these factors, to wit, war, human numbers, finite resource extravagance, ecological vandalism and the

disintegration of our localised communities (the oldest form of social aggregation in all history). Each of these is building to a climax which may well spell the end of civilisation; collectively they constitute a doomsday scenario having no precedent in any former age.

It might be argued that he did indeed foresee the war danger, he certainly wrote about it a lot. But he quite failed to see that the remedy he proposed simply replicated its cause. In this, like all his contemporaries, and like all public utterances on the subject today, he lacked any grasp of the most significant event of the 20th century, which was the First World War.

Here was the clearest possible warning of the unlimited horror that awaited humankind if it failed to devise political mechanisms that would resolve the key problem of human existence: how to match the limitations of its own human scale to the scale of the new forms of power its own inventive genius had created.

The First World War showed with monstrous clarity one result of failing to do so, that if the new power was not brought within the reach of human-scale moral control there was no limit to the cruelties, obscenities and miseries that might be unleashed.

Wells, like many others, in failing to grasp the real nature of the problem, simply danced with destiny with proposals that could only make it worse. Giant power, he believed, could only be controlled by giant organisations; so the answer lay in global government, in a league of nations, in a 'one world' where humanity would be so united that it might 'stand on this earth as though upon a footstool, and stretch fourth its realm amid the stars'.

Such remedies were simply part of the disease and the disease in this case was power – power out of control, power beyond the reach of citizen moral judgement, power running amok, power in the hands of power-hungry miscreants and greedy profiteers who were perpetrating every kind of mischief.

Wells believed science could use the new power it had helped to create to make a new heaven on earth. He could not see that without the element of moral control it would simply create a new hell on earth that would unleash degrees of horror such as humankind had never before known.

The First World War was but the opening stages of the drama. There have been horrors galore all through history, but despite the horror there has been glory, and in once sense history could be seen as a dramatic race between the two. In the modern era power-out-of-control has won; our lives are increasingly suffused with horror, and the glory has faded in a nightmare of triviality, environmental vandalism, vulgarity and obscenity, so that to the horror of war-making-out-of-control, now armed with nuclear weapons, we now have global wastage of resources, environmental destruction, dangerously excessive human numbers and social disintegration, all out of control as well.

It was Wells' failure to grasp that power could only be used for great purposes if it was subject to moral judgement, that such judgement could only stem from personal relationships, that such relationships were only effective on a localised, human-scale basis, if only because any enlargement of the scale transformed relationships from being on a moral basis to being on a power basis, which made his work ultimately so empty.

He cascaded onto the first half of the 20th century with all the brilliance of a floodlit meteorite, he dazzled the contemporary imagination with all the incisive intuition of a boundlessly inventive intelligence, but in 1945, a year before his death, he concluded that the world was a faded world devoid of recuperative power, he argued that man must go steeply up or steeply down and, in his final book, *Mind at the End of its Tether* (the title tells its own story), he concluded that the odds seemed all in favour of his going down and out.

He was very religious man who had a veritable hatred of almost any form of organised religion. His was a religion of facts; he was dazzled by the factual revelations of scientific research in astronomy, biology, psychology and other fields and he proceeded to dazzle the rest of us with his conclusions. He seems to have assumed that science had solved the mystery of life and it led him to write with a kind of cocksure assurance which permitted of no doubts.

He never seems to have entertained the notion that far from solving the mystery of life science, by broadening our understanding of some of its mechanisms, had simply vastly deepened it, and also helped to make clear that it was in fact a mystery that was insoluble. We don't know why we are here and no amount of research in any field can do more than increase our perplexity.

Wells assumed that ultimately life was meaningless and purposeless, at least in terms of individual existence, and that to assume otherwise was a mockery and a fraud. A great deal of religious teaching and practice is in fact just that, but to stop there is to overlook that such teaching has given human life much of its splendour; it is

to overlook too that the human instinct has an imperative need to insist that life is not a meaningless period of animal existence amid the stars, but that it does have both meaning and purpose, and that it is the pursuit of both which bestows on human existence whatever dignity and even nobility it can reach. On this divide neither side can 'prove' anything at all, it becomes a matter of temperament and disposition where the mind is grappling for ultimate veracities within the compass of its own limitations.

### **Magnificent Consumption**

It is inevitable that religious experience should embody much that may bear no 'rational' significance; the mind here is grappling with itself, with its own deepest longings for meaning and assurance, and will not hesitate to create the means to achieve them and thus proceed to rationalise the irrational where it can and to ignore the irrational where it can't. It is a sphere where great art and sublime religious insight often achieve their own magnificent consummation, and the scientific insistence on sticking to 'facts' is not only as irrational and unfounded as any form of religious belief, but leaves the cosmos barren of any comfort or assurance in relation to our deepest longings. There are doubtless sound scientific reasons for clearing all the ornaments off the mantelpiece, but the human disposition to adorn it seems an imperative necessity to human existence and to human development.

It needs to be said that at heart Wells was a socialist who could only see human salvation in authoritarian and even fascist terms. He assumed the need for a global authority which would control armaments and stop war, and since many people today

who persuade themselves they are socialists adhere to the same belief it is important to see why their solution is a non-starter in any but American Empire terms.

Any form of world government in the comprehensive terms Wells envisaged could only be world fascism; a form of authority and power brokered by global power-and-money interests ordaining and imposing governmental matters on the global population.

The idea that 'delegates' would be elected by 'the people' who would then act in the interests of the people is claptrap and ignores the inability of 'the people' to exercise any moral control over any of our existing governments. Democracy on a mass basis is moonshine and the persistent belief that it can work is one reason why we are in such crisis today.

The way forward is not from solutions imposed from above, but in enabling the idealism, the capabilities and the limitless desire selflessly to serve others that prevails so abundantly at the base to flourish and which currently is endlessly stifled and frustrated by centralised controls.

There can be no progress without moral order, and morality is a function of personal relationships in local communities, which is why Gandhi was able to declare, "You cannot have morality without community." The debilitated condition of that factor of community is the key not only to the modern tragedy of crisis unlimited; its restoration is the key to any possible success in alleviating the ominous shadows now closing in on the human adventure with such implacable intensity. ■

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## FORUM

### WESSEX

The comment that 'a purely political approach to the problem of regionalism really is rather old-hat' (*FWR* No. 126) was partly our reason for setting up the Wessex Society in the first place. We felt there was a market for a cultural approach, emphasising such things as regional dialect, the historic Wyvern flag and, of course, real cider! We have persuaded a major flag manufacturer, the Hampshire Flag Company, to add the flag of Wessex to its catalogue, have produced a range of merchandise featuring the Wyvern design, and commissioned an anthem for Wessex with music by composer Hayley Savage and lyrics by one of our members, the Dorset dialect poet Devina Symes. I don't believe that any of this can be described as 'purely political', though we would of course be happy to receive any help that the Fourth World is willing to offer.

**Nick Xylas**

12 Delander Court, Hilton Head Island,  
SC 29928-3211, USA

### STRUCTURES

Looking back over various issues of the review, it is striking how you constantly and exclusively concentrate on structures

rather than individuals. Is this because you can't bear the thought of the truth about us humans? It is human beings which make and drop fragmentation bombs, not systems or structures. Just as the populace chose the robbers rather than Christ, so does the great British public select rogues and militarists as prime ministers. You remember what happened to Old Labour in 1992 when they included, *inter alia*, unilateral nuclear disarmament in its manifesto?

**Howard Cheney**

Aylesmore Farm, Shipston on Stour,  
Warkwickshire CV36 5EJ

*Your one-sided judgementalism ignores the social forces that are operating – money and technology – to disempower people; two million people in London alone protested evil, but all they got was war.*

*My orphanage housed over 350 children and my foster mother had care of 30 of us. Every day, she cooked, cleaned, washed, mended clothes and tended us with love and boundless generosity of spirit. She was a living saint, and if I have any degree of psychological well-being despite my orphan condition it is due to her selfless devotion and compassion to us in working conditions which were so arduous as to beggar belief and would not today be tolerated for an instant.*

*That spirit is being fobbed off and frustrated by the giant structures we live under. That is why we focus on them.*

– Editor

### INTEREST FREE BANKING

Regarding local empowerment, interest in local currencies is snowballing. In March 2004 a regional currency, accepted at traditional banks, was launched in Germany. This was the first region of many planning the same, mostly in Germany, but some also in Austria and in Bavaria.

Here in New Zealand we plan to establish an interest-free banking co-op, based on the flourishing Swedish JAK model. JAK is an interest-free community owned bank. The initials stand for Jord (land/natural resources), Arbete (labour – all human effort), and Kapital (capital, i.e. *real* wealth).

Swedish JAK promoter Eva Stenius' New Zealand presentations were very well received by all, from politicians to peasants. A dynamic group met in Wellington in April to start the ball rolling.

The bank's humanitarian philosophy, and the importance placed on educating its members about money are very positive features. Of the 30 paid staff five are trainers, and all 27,000 members are encouraged to participate in seminars.

A spin-off is emerging: interest in local currency, which JAK is not, strictly speaking, since it deals with national currency – albeit in a most innovative way. A unique points system ensures the sustainability of the fund. Promoters claim that JAK is the safest bank in Sweden.

**Helen Dew**

*12 Costley, Carterton, Wairarapa, New Zealand*

## RADICAL CONSULTATION II

AFTER THE FALL OF AMERICA, THEN WHAT?

*A Discussion of the Options Open to Us Now in Planning For Life After the Collapse of Empire*

Led by KIRKPATRICK SALE

*Sponsored by*

The Fourth World

*and*

The Second Vermont Republic

November 5-7, 2004

Middlebury Inn, Middlebury, Vermont

*To register, contact Prof. Thomas H. Naylor, 202 Stockbridge Road, Charlotte, VT 05445 USA, tel. 802-425-4133, fax 802-425-5330. Registration fee (includes one dinner and refreshments) is \$80 before September 1 and \$125 thereafter. Make your check payable in U.S. dollars to The Second Vermont Republic.*


Contact the Middlebury Inn for lodging reservations at 800-842-4666 or 802-388-4961. The Second Vermont Republic nightly rate for a single is \$88 including breakfast. The Middlebury Inn is near to Burlington International Airport but a rental car is advisable. European guests may want to consider flying into Montreal, which is three hours away.

*For additional information visit either [www.vermontrepublic.org](http://www.vermontrepublic.org) or [www.4thworld.co.uk](http://www.4thworld.co.uk).*

## BOOKS



**A ROUGH GUIDE TO THE UK FARMING CRISIS**, by Kathryn Tulip and Lucy Michaels. CORPORATE WATCH, 2004. £5/£2.50. ([www.corporatewatch.org.uk](http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk)).

 Reviewed by Edward P. Echlin

THIS useful booklet (52 pages) describes our farming, food and countryside take-over, and offers some solutions. Or perhaps better, ways of proceeding. Our problem is what the authors call the 'oligopolic' control of the whole food chain – from soil to seeds to sale – by a few, mostly American, corporations. In Britain a handful of supermarket chains compound the monopoly prowling the world, seeking cheap food, forcing down farmers' earnings, polluting the earth with chemicals, and air and lorry transport. So called 'liberalisation' and globalisation of trade favours not the poor, farmers, nor consumers, but the corporations, *pace* George Monbiot and some confused aid agencies. Ironically the corporations are subsidised by tax payers. Despite globalised trade's pounding of the earth, there is still no aviation fuel tax, lorry road charges, emissions taxes, nor internalised taxes on petrol. In 1992 the pre-tax salary of Tesco's


chief executive was £2.46 million. The average farm income was £10,100.

The aim of corporations – and their politicians – is to eliminate 'inefficient' small and family farms, consolidating soil communities into massive chemical monocrop industries. Yet studies show that small farms preserve soil biodiversity, and produce two to ten times more, better, healthier, and safer food per unit than the technological giants. Small retailers and our precious farmers are suffering, and even being forced from the land. Every time a farming family leaves the countryside, we and the future suffer an irreparable loss.

Very important for our way of proceeding is localisation, local growers, local food, retailers, abattoirs and Farmers' Markets. The authors prefer 'food sovereignty' or 'food democracy' to 'food security' because, they say, more than quantity is necessary. We should import – in 'fair trade' – only what cannot be produced here. Everywhere people should shop locally, grow some of their own, and reject imports even if labelled 'seasonal' or organic. We can assist the climate and rainforests, and our chil-

dren's future, by eating less imported food, and, as far as possible, consume regional, organic, produce. Imported food – and water – can no longer be taken for granted.

**DOWNSIZING THE USA**, by **Thomas H. Naylor & William H. Willimon**. Wm. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO, 1997. ISBN 0-8028-4330-1.

 *Reviewed by John Papworth*


THE media message of American power-mongering tends to be so front page and imposing as to drive out of sight that there are millions of ordinary, decent American people who desire nothing more than to live in peace and friendship with others. This wonderful book is a very heartening corrective, one where the voice of sanity, in this case two American voices of sanity, make themselves heard: voices which realise that peace is very unlikely to be achieved by putting pressure on governments so enormous as to be in the grip of powerful interests beyond any hope of citizen control or of effective response to citizen concerns. So they argue here not to change what government is doing but to change what it is; make it smaller, more controllable, more responsive to citizen concerns so that if, for example, the citizens want peace they can actually get it.

So the main thrust of the book is a well argued plea for the right of present member states to secede from the Union. It is backed with a wealth of highly relevant statistical material, a veritable goldmine of pertinent quotes and a powerful strain of constructive reasoning which makes for a compulsive page-turner. It joins the ranks of classical political literature. It is literature which is the guts of the politics of the 21st century and with which, along with Kohr's

*Breakdown of Nations* and Sale's *Human Scale*, no radical can afford to dispense.

As the authors themselves put it, 'What we are proposing is decentralising, down-sizing, and dissolving virtually every major institution in America and replacing these obsolete monoliths with collections of small, voluntary, cooperative communities, developed entirely through bottom-up participatory means.'

**UNARMED HEROES: THE COURAGE TO GO BEYOND VIOLENCE**, *compiled and edited by Peace Direct*. CLAIRVIEW BOOKS, 2004, £ 10.95.

 *Reviewed by Patricia Knox*

IN every trouble spot in the world, there are centres of peace and reconciliation, in Northern Ireland, Iraq, Afghanistan, in New York, following September 11. Groups founded by survivors and victims of war and atrocities, and by former members of the armed forces who have transformed their way of thinking. Working with war widows and with traumatised children, they work reconciling victims and aggressors, they transform grief and tragedy into hope, compassion and generosity, islands of sanity and hope in a world where war and violence are rife. An inspiring book, telling the story of ordinary people who do extraordinary things in response to all-too ordinary violence.

**REAL DEMOCRACY: THE NEW ENGLAND TOWN MEETING AND HOW IT WORKS**, by *Frank M. Bryan*. UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, 2004.

 *Reviewed by Thomas H. Naylor*

WHEN Vermont eventually negotiates its freedom from the United States of America, what kind of government will it have?

Hopefully, a government similar to the one described by Frank Bryan in his new book about New England town meetings – Real Democracy. According to Bryan real democracy requires:

- ◆ First, government small enough to give a significant number of citizens a significant chance to make a significant difference on a significant number of issues.
- ◆ Second, larger governments that trust their citizens enough to let them make mistakes on matters of importance.

Three decades in the making, Real Democracy calls for a radical reordering of public and private power downward – a paradigm reversal:

Let us ask first: is this government small enough and not is this government big enough? Let us ask first: can this store deliver goods humanly and not can this store deliver goods efficiently? Let us ask first: does this school understand its community and not does this school understand how to give exams?

Based on data collected from 1,669 Vermont town meetings over a period of 34 years, Real Democracy is hands down the definitive work on town meetings and grassroots democracy.

For a nation obsessed with money, power, size, speed, greed, and fear of terrorism, Real Democracy is a breath of fresh

air. It provides a communitarian alternative to the dehumanised, mass production, mass media, mass consumption, narcissistic lifestyle that pervades most of America. It is also a dramatic reminder of what might have been and what might still be in this country. In a highly readable, yet strongly analytical style, Bryan shows that small Vermont towns with their town meetings are a viable alternative to megalomania.

Thanks in part to their annual town meetings, many Vermont towns have not experienced the loss of political will, collective memory and traditional culture experienced elsewhere in the United States.

As evidence of the independence of Vermont towns, 160 town meetings passed resolutions demanding a freeze on the expansion of nuclear armaments in 1982 while Ronald Reagan was flying high. Then in 1990 seven Vermont communities voted overwhelmingly to secede from the Union.

Bryan has combined scholarly research, exhaustive empirical evidence, and in-depth analysis to produce a fascinating, engaging, and at all times entertaining treatise on town meetings.

Real Democracy deserves the serious attention of historians scholars, social scientists, and anyone else interested in direct democracy. It is a must read for all members of the Second Vermont Republic.

*It is possible that the mass of contemporary mankind may not be as readily accessible to fresh ideas as the younger, more childish minds of earlier generations and it is also possible that hard imaginative thinking has not increased so as to keep pace with the expansion and complication of human societies and organisations. That is the darkest shadow upon the hopes of mankind.*

**H.G. Wells,**

*Mind At The End of Its Tether, 1945*

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## FOURTH WORLD SPECTATOR

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**WERE YOU one of the million people who lost their life savings in the near collapse of Equitable Life – a savings and insurance company? Well, what is the lesson?**

It seems at present that if people want to save, to have some security in their old age, then the only option is invest in one or other of the giant companies specialising in such business. But all these companies invest in national stock market shares, so that even if they are efficiently managed a major lurch in market conditions can drive any of them to the wall. The answer, since market conditions look like being increasingly unstable, seems to be to root such savings in local control of local resources. A village or neighbourhood Limited Company Trust is formed, owned and controlled solely by local residents.

The money raised from selling non-transferable (except back-to-the-Trust) shares to local residents could be used to purchase local land or buildings, the rents from which provide the income, or to fund a surplus-yielding service such as organic

vegetable schemes, coffee bar, shoe repair or whatever seems both feasible and profitable.

A local trust financed from local funds and owning and controlling significant local resources is a far safer bet for pension security in old age than anything going in the national market. Do we need a special organisation to promote it everywhere?

I SEE FROM THE LATEST ISSUE of a journal called *Ethical Record* that my old friend Peter Cadogan is a fully baptised member of the UK-organised atheist group. It has its origins in an era when religion was identified with class oppression, authority, militarism, royalty, privilege and God wot.

So what could any decent radical do but oppose it and build a rather squalid little concrete structure like Conway Hall as a focus of opposition? But of course it all answers nothing. This latest issue of their journal talks about teaching atheism in schools. Do these wonderful people not see it is like teaching Arabs that the desert is made of sand?

As a Christian I declare that I believe in

God (the modern liturgies murder the statement by saying 'We' believe. I ask you, what are they even trying to assert with this bogus liturgical communism?). The atheists kick off with the equally irrational statement 'I don't believe in God'. Well, my irrational belief is at least backed up by the evidence of my eyes and of God's creation everywhere around me; the other boys and girls are simply trying to assert water is not wet.

WE HAD JUST INSTALLED our new vicar, whom the Church bureaucracy insists on calling the Priest In Charge; nobody uses this new-fangled title, one which empowers the bishop to shift clergy around as the fluctuating fortunes of the Church may seem to demand, so that she could find herself in due course the Priest in Charge of several parishes, just another indication that the Church has lost the plot and believes the priestly function can be dispensed like Nescafe or cornflakes. But there we are. The thing is I was walking down the central aisle of that ancient and almost empty church when suddenly I saw Marcelle walking along the side aisle. I was about to say, 'Darling, aren't we going home now?' when suddenly reality crashed in. It was not of course Marcelle at all, but a member of the congregation whose movements and shadowy appearance in the gloom of a near-dark church suddenly brought the memory of her to life and a searing reminder that she had died nearly ten years ago. An ordinary case of mistaken identity, the stuff no doubt of supernatural vision and out-of-the-body hallucinations which pepper history. But the personal impact was devastating; I sat on a bench in the unlit churchyard and found myself weep-

ing uncontrollably and somehow relieved that no one was around to witness my pain. If I burden you with a reminder of it, something widows the world over must experience, perhaps it is because I just need to express it and share it.

SINCE I CAME TO LIVE here nearly four years ago four shops in the high street have closed and the two remaining general stores are either owned by a chain store group or work on a franchise to one; the effect is the same. The same giant lorries deliver the same range of goods. The profits, instead of circulating locally to enrich local life, are creamed off to some remote boardroom. The goods on display include many shelves of chocolates and candy bars, a variety of factory processed foods and massive quantities of spongy white bread, as ready a recipe for constipation as may be devised. One result is the increasing incidence of obesity, especially among the young and even the children; another is the over-worked and misnamed surgery where there is a continuous flow of afflicted patients of all ages. Often they hobble in with the aid of a stick, crippled with rheumatism, arthritis and other sundry ills to which the flesh has become heir, their features contorted with pain or long endured suffering, but nobody seems to note the connection or ponder that we are what we eat.

THE DAILY DIET of vast masses of people today is as dangerous as it is disgusting, but no politician would dare risk losing votes by telling people as much. I suppose a ban on advertising any food that is not fresh, that is not organically grown and naturally wholesome, coupled with a bid to transform our national sickness service into a

genuine health service by explaining to people just how their bodies work and why they can only function healthily by consuming healthy food having the vitality of freshness and integrity, would decimate the cost of our medical work. But we are in a merry-go-round where food values promoted by advertising grip the minds of the gullible and politicians who sought to challenge those values would soon find themselves in the doghouse.

TALKING OF POLITICIANS I went the other evening to listen to Tony Benn. On the personal level he is a remarkable phenomenon, able to pack a very large theatre with not a seat to spare as he sits on a mid-stage chair, wisecracks comments on the contemporary scene, answers (or at least replies) to questions and generally enables lots of people to feel that politicians are not such a bad lot after all. But the fact is he is very much Old Labour and whilst Old Labour may be old hat New Labour is intellectually bankrupt, it is really a gang of new Tories able to gain and hold power by sleight of hand, with disillusionment with

the old Tories and a massive deployment of mass media manipulation now rapidly running out of steam.

THEY ARE PROPOSING build a vast new football stadium on the edge of our village, something that will alter its character and the quality of village life immensely. Our narrow, one-pavement high street will suffer congestion and we, its inhabitants, will suffer bouts of noise, air pollution and the general detritus of football crowd conduct as a consequence. One of my friends wrote to his MP to protest, and for good measure wrote to the neighbouring MP in whose constituency it is proposed to site the stadium. The replies he received are as eloquent a testimony to the hollowness of democratic pretensions of a mass society as might be devised. The first MP replied that since the proposed stadium was not in his constituency he should write to the one elected for that area. The second man pointed out that since my friend did not live in his constituency he should write to the person elected to represent it. Fear not the struggle, naught availeth ... ■

*It seemed odd and sad that mankind could for centuries have so effortlessly graced the landscape with structures that seemed made for it – little arched bridges and stone farmhouses, churches, windmills, winding roads, hedgerows – and now appeared quite unable to do anything to the countryside that wasn't like a slap across the face. These days anything has at best a sleek utility, like the dully practical windmills slipping past with the scenery outside my train windows, or else it looks cheap and temporary, like the tin sheds and concrete hangars that pass for superstores on the edge of every medium-sized town. We used to build civilisations. Now we build shopping malls.*

**Bill Bryson**

*Neither Here Nor There*

## Fourth World News



President Bush has proposed an amendment to the US constitution to ban gay marriages. The manufacture of nuclear bombs remains legal. • Plans to immunise children in the rapidly spreading outbreak of polio in Nigeria have been aborted by Muslim opposition on the grounds the vaccine would make girls infertile. • 40% of teenagers are reported to have taken drugs; this is not a reference to either tea, coffee, newspapers or TV advertising. High security fences, supervised entrances and closed circuit television are now standard school features to combat drug dealing. • A Foods Standards Agency report says nearby half of food label descriptions ('fresh', 'home-made', 'farmhouse', etc.) are misleading. • Child abuse crimes have increased 15-fold in the last 20 years, much of it related to the internet. Over 7,000 people in the UK accessed a child porno site in the USA. • A Russian nuclear submarine is in such a state of disrepair it could explode any minute. • A new supersonic aircraft will enable Londoners to reach New York in two hours. • The astronomer Royal Sir Martin Rees declares in a new book that human survival prospects to the end of the present century are no more than 50/50. • There has been a sharp rise in sexual diseases among teenagers. • The Consumers Association declares many breakfast foods marketed with free toys and cartoons are harmful to children's health because of excess levels of sugar, salt and fats. • The Japanese Prime Minister says the 'pacifist' constitution which forbids Japan to have an army is illogical and outdated and should be changed. • Russia's Human Rights groups have listed 345,796 people killed or jailed in Stalin's purges. The full number of those killed is estimated to be more than 10 million. • Scientists are urging that TV should be banned for infants because of the behaviour problems it creates. • President Bush has declared war against Sunni

Muslims because he says they are trying to determine Iraq's future through force. How dare they copy his own policy. • Net immigration in the UK is now running at nearly a quarter million a year. • The majority of UK businesses are now opposed to the EU constitution. • Half a million elderly people in Britain are being abused, and it is largely going unnoticed, according to the House of Commons Health Select Committee. • Pupils in England will receive £30 a week as an incentive to carry on their studies after senior school. • President Bush has been accused of using foreign nations to influence the next US election after a Saudi ambassador pledged to lower oil prices to boost the American economy. • The supermarket giant Tesco raked in £1 for every £8 spent in Britain last year. • The Archbishop of Canterbury has accused Tony Blair and the Labour Government of damaging democracy. • Tony Blair has finally given in to public demand by announcing a referendum on whether Britain should sign the European Constitution. He has stated, however, that one referendum may not be enough to secure the result he wants. He does not even say when the referendum will be held. • Television soap operas encourage anti-social behaviour among children, according to the the British Psychological Society annual conference. • The Lord Chief Justice has said that the British public have little confidence in the police, prosecutors and courts bringing criminals to justice. • King Abdullah of Jordan cancelled a meeting with President Bush in protest of America's support for Israel. • India broke a new record by holding the world's largest general election. A possible 670 million people have the chance to vote. • The Conservative Party has put forward new plans for the decentralisation of government power in Britain, by giving more power to local councils. – SAM HAINS

## Fourth World News

