



Robin Cook, former foreign secretary, said 'Blair knew there were no weapons of mass destruction'. * Hans Blick said Saddam Hussain had destroyed his weapons of mass destruction ten years ago. * Tony Blair is still the prime minister. * In four years the global population has increased by 400 million. * The UK Conservative Party has been in turmoil over secret manoeuvring to eject its present pro-British leader for a pro-Brussels one. * A US intelligence official has accused Bush of ignoring evidence that did not support his call for war against Iraq. * In one year the number of UK civil servants has increased by 20,000. * The *Times* obit. of Sir Eric Pountain declares he invigorated his enormous building company by letting its divisions flourish independently. * The Kazakhstan government is planning to build a huge dam across the rapidly disappearing Aral sea, described as one of the world's worst ecological disasters. * The UN has warned that Afghanistan is falling into the hands of powerful drug cartels and 'narco-terrorists'. * 11,000 firemen have been seeking to control the Californian wildfires which have made over 50,000 homeless. * Scientists are warning that polar bears could disappear from the arctic as ice continues to melt. * Neil Kinnock, Vice President of European Commission, is accused of giving 'jobs for the boys'. *

2003 looks like being the year with the lowest UK rainfall since records began. * An aquatic weed used in home aquariums, and which grows five inches in one day, is threatening fish stocks, river systems and wetland habitats all over Britain. * In Serbia the Danube water level has fallen over 30 feet due to global warming. * Taiwan is drafting a new constitution establishing the island as a sovereign state separate from China. The Beijing government is annoyed; it regards Taiwan as a renegade Chinese province. * UK Home Secretary David Blunkett wants to introduce identity cards. * Zoos are urged to give much more room to captive animals accustomed to roaming vast areas in the wild. in the wild. * Families alleging their autistic children, (over 1000) are the result of the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine have been told there is not enough medical evidence to support their claim for compensation. * There has been a rapid increase in sexually transmitted diseases. Gonorrhoea rates for men aged 35 to 44 have risen by 200% in seven years. * The Concorde aeroplane is no longer in service. Its total cost could have refurbished Britain's entire rail system. * The number of prison inmates in England and Wales has risen to a record 74,149; it does not include Tony Blair. Yet. — **SAM HAINS**



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*



A WATER ETHIC FOR LIFE

Kirkpatrick Sale

NIGERIA'S LESSONS FOR EUROPE

Dele Oguntimoju

Editorial:

The Core of Civilisation

No. 124

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sense of an agreeable residential quarter with streets of modest homes reflecting human needs and aspirations, and around which trade and business was conducted, has been obliterated by huge steel and concrete blocks of rentable office space. In fifty years of free trade and of a bleak mindless quest for economic 'growth' and expansion the city has effectively been murdered. After office hours those bustling overcrowded streets of dead souls trapped in the current gold rush with no laughter in their eyes, are empty, dead, dark, bare and silent, a mausoleum of human nobility.

DOROTHY FOSTER GIVES ME an earful of the UK Independence Party, urges that its policies are more in line with Fourth World objectives than anything around and that I should join; she even got them to send me a load of their stuff. There are a surprising number of Anti EUroplot organisations and all seem to be tarred with the same brush of ineffectuality, all seem to assume that either we can modify the terms of our membership by opposing the EU, or by reverting to our traditional weights and measures, or by getting out of the Brussels circus altogether. Such pleas ignore the immense power of money at work here and that any degree of involvement in the EUroplot is to put one's neck on the block. The get-out-completely people also fail to grasp that to revert to the *status quo ante* is simply to recreate the basis from which the EUroplot took off in the first place. This is where the UK Independence Party scores a point with some of its policies urging a restoration of local democracy. But it is half-hearted stuff. Education, for example involves shifting 'the balance of power away from the bureaucrats' so the bureaucrats will still be

there. Why not, in such an emphatically local matter, and one of key importance to liberty, abolish them altogether? Their literature does nothing to remove any distrust of the whole concept of change via mass party machinery, and if you think I am being finicky too much by far just take on board how a one-time socialist party under Mr Blair has succeeded in establishing a new corporate state in which capitalism flourishes and in which, when the going gets tough, a UK brand of fascism, will emerge.

IT DOES NOT DO to try to do too much, as some fountain of wisdom or other may have said, but with guests coming I was peeling potatoes in a bowl of water when the phone rang.

It was a loyal supporter to tell me she could not make an Academic Inn meeting as she was lecturing in Canterbury University. Then the phone rang again, this time John Coleman to say he could not attend because he was to have an eye operation. John, like me, likes to chat, and I was busy telling him about Goderic's birthday party, with the phone wedged between my ear and my shoulder, when it fell into the water among the potato peelings. For some reason it reminded me of the newly married sea captain in one of Smollet's novels who liked to follow seamanship ways by sleeping in a hammock. On his wedding night he insisted his bride share his, but in the middle of the night the extra burden broke the supporting hook and abruptly deposited them both on the floor. But I recovered the receiver, which seemed no worse for its immersion, although John seemed to take some reassuring that I had not fallen through the floor. ■

JOHN COLEMAN, who runs all sorts of book publishing projects, including my latest effort *A Pair of Cranks*, called one evening after selling books at the Schumacher Lectures in Bristol. I gave him a cheese omelette and organic veg dinner and a bed; the next day he drove me to London to Anne's Birthday Bash. He tells me there were over a thousand people at the Bristol lectures and I wondered, since people constantly throw the question at my own efforts, what kinds of action were decided on. John's conversational style is nothing if not erudite, with a fair sprinkle of quotes from Disraeli, Gladstone, Ruskin, Tolstoy and other luminaries of yore. I think he has missed his mark by not being in the diplomatic service, he should have been an ambassador at least. Over the years I have learned to break quite a lot of the code of his utterances so that if he responds with 'Yes, I know what you mean' what he really means is that he does not altogether agree. If, however, he says 'I know *exactly* what you mean' he is really saying he disagrees with you altogether. I don't like cars or motoring or motorways but I was happy to accept his offer of a lift. I wanted to attend a church service at a nearby town en route but at 10.30am it was empty. When I enquired I was told there would be one at 10.30 and it dawned on me I should have put my watch back one hour at midnight to mark the end of summer. So we drove for an hour to another village, but at the church door people were fast coming out, so we stopped at Dick Body's farmhouse home where we had a curious argument about free trade. Dick sees it as an absolute principle to which all should adhere; I was not sure. I wanted to know what any free trade is for, on the grounds that any economic

activity devoid of moral principle is simply brigandage. We seem to have succeeded mightily in failing to convince each other.

The drive into London was a nightmare product of free trade and provides no clearer testimony that our whole way of life is in a tailspin of terminal eclipse. Mass motoring (carmageddon) really represents the tremors of a transient technological delirium. Those motorways with their multiple crossings and barriers, their constant signs and pejorative notices, and the flare of their thousands of energy-consuming standard lamps which blot out the stars, do not fill me with awe at the marvels of mechanised existence, only with a deep sense of unease at the inevitable destiny that awaits such a massive and utterly pointless waste and misuse of our material heritage, and the consequent human loss of poetry and the music of the soul.

The giveaway is really in the tortuous shapes of the buildings that assail rather than adorn the city skylines. There is here no cohesive sense of civic dignity or purpose, no harmony or proportion, not a vestige of any attempt at grandeur, just reckless, greedy assertiveness, bleak economic egoism and a jarring frenzy of infantile money-lust and anarchic vandalism. And all these giant rectangles, expressing nothing more than a profound sickness of mind and spirit, have erupted within the last fifty years. Nothing is more certain than that before another half century is out those that still stand will be empty, useless hulks. Three thousand years to progress from a pyramid to a box, and the result is not only the first ugly civilisation, but one which is insufferably boring.

The same sickness has swamped what used to be the inner city of London; any

THE CORE OF CIVILISATION

WHAT IS CIVILISATION? *We are clearly in such deep trouble, and no less are clearly heading for so much more, we need to ask ourselves what the whole show is about, and what it is that needs to be safe-guarded and promoted if civilisation signifies anything at all, and is not to continue to disintegrate under our noses.*

We can discount the idea being so assiduously promoted that it consists of the kind of energy systems that enable complex systems of transport and communication to function, if only because the record is replete that numerous civilisations have flourished without them.

We can discount, too, that it consists simply of the creation of great works of art in whatever form, for these are products of civilisation rather than begetters of it. It is true that no civilisation has flourished without them, or without putting a premium on them as significant advances in human creative capacity and sensibility; indeed, there are many reasons why the quest for beauty and harmony may be seen as elements integral to the advancement of any civilised existence, if only because such a quest is incompatible with the grosser characteristics of the human disposition and can help to control and even surmount them, and on such a reckoning it should surely give us pause that ours is the first in the entire

record which can unhesitatingly be described as ugly.

But if we survey the achievements of civilisation down the ages, and not least in the modern era, what stands out is surely the extension in the public domain of those human qualities of compassion, of caring and sharing, and the desire to live in love and peace with not just those near and dear to us, but with the generality of our fellows. It is this spirit which has underpinned the creation of hospitals, of schools and welfare programmes, and of moves towards universal peace and disarmament. If words matter, even if so often they don't, much of all this is expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations, which outlaws such things as torture, physical abuse and so on. In words at least we may say this is civilisation.

Yet despite the existence of the Charter and of many institutions that seek to give expression to its objectives, we seem to be in a quagmire of cross purposes. That charter, which ought to be a beacon, has already become a moss-grown milestone as other forces are at work which seem bent on destroying the whole adventure of civilised progress.

These economic, political, administrative and social forces have one glaring common characteristic: they are impersonal in their workings, and often hugely so. They

depend on the response of people to the impersonal imperatives of institutions or organisations over which they lack any meaningful or effective control, and often these pressures appear to have a life and force of their own, independent of any personal moral criteria. All too often people feel impelled, for example, to purchase cars in order to get to work, and generally to adopt a lifestyle which repudiates the well-being of themselves, their families, their neighbours and of society at large.

Yet the qualities on which civilisation depends are all, without exception, personal, on personal relationships, if only because it is only through such relationships that moral principles can be affirmed and find expression in their application to the social order. They depend on the reactions of people not to institutions, but to each other, which is doubtless why no religious creed fails in its teachings to echo the cardinal injunction to 'love thy neighbour'. It is indeed an injunction which is the root of all striving for any civilised existence,

and the tragedy of our technological era is that all the dominant drives of modern mass societies are at war with it.

The development of huge impersonal forces controlling our lives is a form of spiritual cancer which can only destroy the host body; hence the challenge to any seeker of ways to check the monstrous evils which increasingly encompass our living clay is to create new patterns of living, (albeit some are very old, as old indeed as anything in the human record), patterns that are largely governed and dominated by relationships which are personal and which reflect in their workings the human rather than the anti-human scale. This, surely, is the way forward, even if it is against the grain of all the workings of the forces that now prevail, the way that can ensure that a full expression of peoples' moral judgements in relation to the workings of the social order at last comes to control them and to rescue us all from the doomsday scenario those forces have done so much to create.

which constantly makes the mistake of assuming that in the realm of political and social affairs the shortest distance between any two points is always a straight line, and this is probably why they are so ineffective and why the onset of another global war is unstoppable. A government ministry of peace does rather seem to be on par with seeking to persuade the Federation of British Brewers to establish a campaigning branch of the National Temperance League.

A FRIEND IN THE VILLAGE kindly drove me the 150 miles to Wollaston for that birthday and the journey jolted me into a much fuller awareness of the suicidal depravity of our motoring culture. Looking at roadmaps is one thing, but to actually travel for hours on motorways and dual carriageways is to be confronted with the mordant reality of thousands and thousands of acres of priceless productive farmland buried under a needless alternative method of travel to railways and canals; to be made aware that the price of mass motoring is the savage desecration and permanent destruction on a giant scale of this lovely land for an essential ephemeral mode of mechanical transport.

We turned off at one stage for refreshment. Somehow the coffee shop managed with undeviating accuracy to target just what is wrong with so much of our lifestyle; we found ourselves in a queue at a coffee counter and took our turns at taking a cardboard cup and holding it under a spout, above which were push buttons to indicate which form of coffee we might have. We joined another queue to a cash machine served by a bored young lady who never once looked up as we made payment.

We then sat on plastic chairs at plastic

tables to drink, and that was it. Zero personal contact, just moving from one machine to another in a weirdly depersonalized ambience suggesting it can only be a matter of time before the money-quest and science proceed to programme us with genetic engineering and cloning into machines as well.

ON ANOTHER OCCASION I went all the way to London specially for another birthday party, this time Anne Fealdman's, which was no end of a do. It was in a newly converted building, possibly a former warehouse in the city, now an art gallery full of pictures of rather sad looking nude women. Anne made an impromptu speech explaining how she had consulted numerous books in the library on how to make a birthday speech, none of which seemed to help her. She seemed quite unaware that she had a natural gift for it which would make any such assistance superfluous. The reader who does not carefully note the names on the inside front cover of this journal will not know that she is the lynchpin of our mailing list, nor that she has been maintaining it as a voluntary contribution to the great cause since 1981. Over twenty years' service! And as I left she ticked me off for not keeping her up to date with some of the changes to it. It is a mixture here of unsung service and total reliability, those ineluctable factors maintaining morale even through the darkest hours when readers fail to respond to our pleas for prompt subscriptions. No need to say Anne is a lovely person, she is God's gift to a great need. May she have many more birthday celebrations to echo this particular one which, stand by for the pay-off line, was her 90th!

Learning to live within nature's biophysical limits is the ultimate bottom line, and we simply don't have a choice on this one. Without the natural support systems on which we all depend, there won't be much left of business – or of humanity! The only question is just how long it's going to take us to accommodate to this over-arching reality.

Jonathon Porritt

It takes a whole village to raise a child.

African Proverb

To be small or not to be at all, that is the question.

Leopold Kohr

I think that it is necessary to address another restructuring, concerning the system of values on which contemporary civilisation rests.

President Vaclav Havel

was hot on high-sounding aspirations, but rather lukewarm on their practicalities. His Commonwealth in any case ignored the fate of the somewhat similar undertakings of his fellow Quakers of rival chocolate firms, Cadbury, Rowntree and Fry. Today they are large charitable trusts, but their funds are directed to ways of improving the workings of our present disintegrating social structures rather than to transforming them.

He never seems to have asked himself why a workforce saturated with a daily dosage of tabloid and TV consumerist values over a lifetime should feel the least inclination to abandon them for his caring and sharing ones, or why people reduced to a state of almost total pessimism and powerlessness in the political and economic realms should suddenly become responsible co-owners of his Commonwealth simply because he had signed the transfer documents.

Nevertheless today the company flourishes, with overseas branches and a generally excellent market performance, thanks to an able technical management team at the top. But 'New Life and Peace in Industry'? I recall Ernest warmly enthusing about the study and research centre to explore alternative social and economic structures it would develop, the conferences and other events it would hold, the papers it would publish to spread the gospel of common ownership and wider concerns.

If many of his dreams have evaporated under the mundane pressures of high-powered reality, let us at least salute him for trying, and salute too his son Goderic, for keeping so much of the flame of his father's founding idealism alive, to say

nothing of the constant support and encouragement he has given over the years to the Editor of this journal. I always think of him as a gentleman; not in the outdated concepts of some sort of social status, but in the Shavian sense of one who puts more into life than he gets out of it.

Over lunch I chatted with Christian Schumacher, who related how as a boy he was allowed in Fritz's study to look up words in the dictionary and to pose questions to him. I had not seen Christian for several years and as we talked it suddenly struck me he looked about the same age as when I first knew his father. There's a generational encapsulation for you! I would meet Fritz occasionally for lunch at a small Italian restraint near the Coal Board offices he largely ran. He would declaim gloomily on the awesome governmental folly of allowing the coal industry to collapse and I would declaim about the job of keeping a radical magazine on the rails. We would then take turns to try to cheer up each other. Looking back, I found myself wondering who had the greater difficulties.

Another guest at that birthday bash was an elderly 'peace' veteran lady with attractive blue eyes and other features which always tend to get me speculating on what a beauty she must have been in her youth. I confess however she rather gobsmeaked me when, with considerable emphasis and earnestness, she informed me that in the following week a Labour MP was going to move a Private Member's Bill to establish a Ministry of Peace. I think she rather mistook my astonishment for endorsement and proceeded to explain the role I might play in the new ministry's affairs. Peace organisations tend to be the province of a great deal of this kind of woolly-minded idealism

A WATER ETHIC FOR LIFE

Kirkpatrick Sale

The author lives in New York State and is one of the most prolific and widely read radical authors in the USA. His books include The Conquest of Paradise, Human Scale and Rebels Against the Future.

A FEW WEEKS AGO a conference on 'The Water of Life' was held at the Omega Institute in upstate New York to honor the United Nations declaration of 2003 as the International Year of Freshwater and to address the multiple crises of a resource that everywhere is being depleted, polluted, and diverted.

The agenda was heavy with famous professional activists: Robert Kennedy of the Natural Resources Defense Council, Ralph Nader of Public Citizen, Anita Roddick of the Body Shop, Vandana Shiva, the Indian physicist, and a half-dozen others. Their themes were various, but the emphasis was on what Nader called 'the commercialisation of water', both through the worldwide drive of corporations to take over municipal water systems to run them for profit and through the increasingly profitable \$22-billion-a-year bottled-water business.

Those are two evil trends, no doubt, and deserve to be opposed fiercely, a job that most of the activists seem to be taking on full-time. (Well, Kennedy doesn't oppose bottled water; he owns a bottled-water company.) But the commercialisation of water and the diversion of it into 5 billion little plastic bottles is hardly the most dangerous assault on the world's freshwater.

Somehow the conference overlooked the really critical fact that potable freshwater, which makes up only three per cent of the earth's waters, is rapidly running out, because of pollution, salinisation and outright overuse faster than replenishment. Then, at the very end, it was my turn to speak. Just as we have done with countless species, I said, and with most of our forests, much of our fertile topsoils, we have driven freshwater to the point of near-extinction. In a rational society, water would be on the Endangered Species List. And I mentioned a few hard truths:

- ◆ Only 15 per cent of the 2,262 watersheds in the United States are considered by the federal government to have 'good' water and 23% are determined to have unacceptable – let's call that undrinkable– water. That's 520 watersheds in this richest of all lands with undrinkable water, and those will surely include the most important rivers abutting the largest cities and greatest industrial concentrations.
- ◆ Thirty-three freshwater fish have been made extinct, most in the last 50 years, and some waters such as Africa's Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika seem to be losing half their species; one third of all freshwater fish in the world are

endangered.

- ◆ Some 250 million pounds of toxic pollutants are legally dumped in surface waters of the United States every year, probably half that dumped illegally; 200 million pounds are legally pumped underground, where they contaminate water tables, many of them drinking water tables.

A few years ago a water official in Oklahoma said this to me: 'The bad news is that most of our water is getting badly polluted; the good news is that there is not enough to go around.' When I was in Iowa a few years ago I went into a men's room where there was a sign saying, 'This water is not to be drunk by pregnant women or children under 12.' Translation: this water is poisoned, by a good proportion of the 800 million pounds of pesticides put on American fields every year. That water comes from the Ogallala aquifer, the fresh water that sustains life (and agriculture) throughout the great plains, but, as the Oklahoma man was suggesting, it is pumped out to agribusiness at the rate of 12 billion cubic meters a year, 8–14 times faster than Nature can replenish it, and its future is short.

There is no doubt that the country, and the world at large, faces a water calamity. And the really alarming thing is that somehow our society just continues to ignore it. We refuse to acknowledge it even when the statistics are presented. We are in a pathological deep denial.

How many people ever knew that this was the UN's Year of Freshwater? There were no daily headlines, nightly news specials, magazine analyses, bestsellers telling us of this and what it means. Who knew that March 22 was World Water Day? Who

has read – or even heard of – the *UN World Water Report* issued that day? An international conference of the freshwater crisis was held in August in Tajikistan – who knew? Who heard what it did?

We are using up freshwater in alarming ways, and we are completely deaf to those trying to tell us of the calamity. A calamity that looks sure to become a disaster. I am not alone in my pessimism. Here is what that World Water Report had to say last March:

'Attitude and behavior problems lie at the heart of the crisis. Inertia at leadership level and a world population not fully aware of the scale of the problem means that we fail to take the needed timely corrective actions.'

It goes on to quote UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura: 'Of all the social and natural crises we humans face, the water crisis is the one that lies at the heart of our survival and that of our planet Earth. No region will be spared from the impact of this crisis which touches every facet of life, from the health of children to the ability of nations to secure food for their citizens. Water supplies are falling while the demand is dramatically growing at an unsustainable rate. Over the next 20 years, the average supply of water world-wide per person is expected to drop by a third.'

The report goes on: 'Despite widely available evidence of the crisis, political commitment to reverse these trends has been lacking. A string of international conferences over the past 25 years has focused on the great variety of water issues, including ways to provide the basic water supply and sanitation services required in the years to come. Several targets have been set to

FOURTH WORLD SPECTATOR



GODERIC BADER'S 80th birthday party, held in the Commonwealth Centre of the Scot Bader factory, was quite a bash.

About 180 people made it for a superb buffet lunch, and a quartet of young musicians played some lovely items, which, owing to the hall's acoustics, were far from being fully audible. The hall itself has a curious tilted ceiling, as though one end of the building had collapsed, in a style which must have been very avant-garde in the Sixties and has lead nowhere since. I kept encountering people I had known for years without being able to place them. One man of over 90 shook my hand vigorously and sought to remind me we had met at a conference in Portsmouth, a place I cannot recall ever having visited. But a younger generation may well ask, who is Goderic Bader? And thereon hangs some modern history in a minor key.

Goderic's father, Ernest, was a Quaker entrepreneur of Swiss origins who estab-

lished his plastics factory in a Northamptonshire village in the 1940s. He was a non-stop idealist who helped me to establish *Resurgence*, the first journal of the Fourth World. It was taken over by an Indian spiritual entrepreneur, who promptly dropped all that Fourth World nonsense and now claims it to be 'the artistic flagship of the alternative movement'. In those heady days of the early Fifties I urged Ernest not to give the factory to the workforce and instead to sell it to them and lend them the money with which to buy it; as they repaid the loan over the years he would then have a revolving fund for other projects at his disposal. He went ahead with his own plan and assured me that since the Commonwealth contribution provided that a percentage of the profits must be used for charitable purposes, that radical causes would not be ignored. His Scott Bader Commonwealth had as its declared objectives 'The Advancement of New Life and Peace in Industry'. Like many idealists he

So where do concerned people go from here? Is structural change possible? These are the main questions this backgrounder looks at.

The Long and Winding Road is part of a personal journey, an exploration of what NGOs have been attempting to do during the past three or four decades. At the turn of the millennium, NGOs have become segmented into 'issues' and 'development programmes'. We have lost an overarching theory and perspective and there is an increasing feeling that they have to work within the system. With an overpowering-globalisation market and under pressure from donors, NGO efforts on the ground have been reduced to working on credit, watershed, local initiatives, and projects

that appeal, such as health, children, disability, advocacy to propose or modify legislation and policy within the system. A new, overarching theory is thus in the making, bringing together and taking off from current voluntary efforts movements and agitations, experiments and constructive work, local governance systems and intermediary structures. That is where 'the long and winding road' seems to take us, and involves sections of society that are not reached by conventional social, political, cultural and economic institutions.

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improve water management but hardly any' – that's UN-speak for "none" – 'have been met.'

If we should finally awake to the crisis, then I think it essential as a society that we should adopt a variation of Aldo Leopold's 'land ethic', which held that 'an action is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of a living community, wrong when it tends otherwise'. It would be a 'water ethic', thus: a policy or practice is right when it preserves the integrity, stability, diversity, cleanliness and beauty of the waters of the Earth, wrong when it does otherwise.

A water ethic would start with an understanding that water has inherent worth apart from its usefulness to humans and that it should not be interfered with, except in limited and careful satisfaction of a few vital – that is to say, essential- for-our-staying-alive – human needs. Of course we have to have water to drink, for water is the essence – 60% – of the human body, it is the main component of blood, mucus, sweat, tears, urine, breast milk and sperm, among other things, and we need to keep replenishing it – but that doesn't give us any right to waste it, foul it, divert it, or deplete it.

And as to vital human needs, watering golf courses is not one of them, nor hosing down sidewalks, nor are fountains, or nuclear reactors, or private swimming pools, or little plastic bottles of it. Yes, food is a vital need, and some water must be used to make things grow, but we have no business draining or damming up rivers so farmers can water their crops, or letting them use it as profligately as they do because its cost is subsidised by the government, or letting them use inefficient

irrigation and sprinkling schemes that waste about half the water they get or letting them farm in a desert by diverting rivers to them (agribusiness in California uses 83% of the state's meager water supply basically to irrigate deserts). And yes, bodily evacuation is a vital need, but there is no earthly reason that we should put our wastes into drinking-quality water, as we do, or indeed into any water at all: there are other ways to dispose of human byproducts.

Unique resource

A water ethic would also teach us that, in some real and transcendent sense, water is sacred: it is, after all, the greatest part of animal and plant protoplasm, it is essential for the photosynthesis on which all life depends, and it is what makes this planet – unique in all the galaxy as far as we know – habitable at all. But we tend not to see how precious, how holy, it is, even when we drink it on a hot summer day, for, whether we know it consciously or not, I believe our attitude toward water in the West is shaped by our Old Testament consciousness, in which we cannot ever forget the Flood unleashed upon an errant humankind. Floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, thunderstorms, monsoons, tsunamis – this is what we tend to think the true nature of water is. But it is folly to think of water as the enemy of humankind; a proper regard for it will come only when we understand it as the sacred element at the heart of all life.

Finally, a water ethic would teach us to regard the watershed as Nature's way of organising life on Earth, and teach us to live within the confines of our watersheds, protecting and preserving them, and depending

MY OLD MAN'S A BANKER

To be sung to the tune of My Old Man's A Dustman

My Old Man's a Banker
And he's got this wondrous gift
So that what we want we always get
We never practice thrift.

Now when he needs a million pounds
(And we all do now and then)
He gets it very easily
With a squiggle of his pen.

For – yes he can make money
From the thin and empty air
And the fools who are not bankers
All have cause to despair.

For they groan beneath their overdrafts
Like beasts beneath the yoke
And me and Dad watch happily –
To us it's all a joke!

Yes, citizens and governments
Alike are in his debt
They never will be rid of him
That you can safely bet.

He's got them by the curly ones –
Those short and curly hairs
They'll only rid themselves of debt
By leaving it to their heirs.

Yes, businessmen and governments
They are alike his tools
They're too stupid to realise it
But he makes up the rules!

John Seymour

upon their resources to satisfy our vital needs. That system is called, not incidentally, bioregionalism, a word that some of you may have heard before, which simply means learning to live within regions defined by nature, not by legislatures, such as watersheds. And of course it means learning to restore those regions to their original natural environments, without dams, without pollution, and with undisturbed wetlands at the rivers' edges, nature's own method of cleansing water far more efficiently than any treatment plant. The institution of the Riverkeepers is the beginning of that bioregional goal – the first was on the Hudson River and there are now 144 of them across the land – and it would be well to support and expand their efforts.

I think it behoves us to realise that historically all societies, all empires, built upon irrigation-fed agriculture from 6,000 years ago on have collapsed in time, most

of them after only a few centuries: Sumeria, Assyria, Carthage, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Inca, Aztec, Hohokam, dozens in all parts of the world. Ours is an irrigation-dependent agriculture, particularly in California and the Great Plains, and it is using up, poisoning and salinating our water at a catastrophic rate. Most of the rest of the world also depends on irrigation – some 40 per cent of the world's food production comes from irrigated land, and irrigation accounts for 70 per cent of water use worldwide – and they too will be in trouble in the near future. 'If history is any guide,' writes Marc Reisner in his study of waters in the American west, 'the odds that we can sustain an irrigation-dependent civilization would have to be regarded as low.'

That, as one woman said in the question period at the end of my talk, should 'hit us hard upside the head. ■

'Modern capitalism,' writes Mr Keynes, 'is absolutely irreligious, without internal union, without much public spirit, often, though not always, a mere congeries of possessors and pursuers.'

It is that whole system of appetites and values, with its deification of the life of snatching to hoard, and hoarding to snatch, which now, in the hour of its triumph, while the plaudits of the crowd still ring in the ears of the gladiators and the laurels are still unfaded on their brows, seems sometimes to leave a taste as of ashes on the lips of a civilisation which has brought to the conquest of its material environment resources unknown in earlier ages, but which has not yet learned to master itself.


It was against that system, while still in its supple and insinuating youth, before success had caused it to throw aside the mask of innocence, and while its true nature was unknown even to itself, that the saints and sages of earlier ages launched their warnings and their denunciations. The language in which theologians and preachers expressed their horror of the sin of covetousness may appear to the modern reader too murkily sulphurous; their precepts on the contracts of business and the disposition of property may seem an impracticable pedantry. But rashness is a more agreeable failing than cowardice, and, when to speak is unpopular, it is less pardonable to be silent than to say too much.

R.H. Tawney

Religion and the Rise of Capitalism

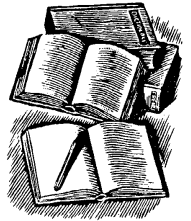
BOOKS

THE 2030 SPIKE – COUNTDOWN TO GLOBAL CATASTROPHE, by Colin Mason. EARTHSCAN PUBLICATIONS, 2003. £17.95/\$29.95. ISBN 1-84407-018-2.

 Reviewed by John Papworth


ANYTIME the trickle now a stream will become a flood. Books telling the world what readers of *Fourth World Review* have known for decades, that our technodominated world is going to pot, that human numbers are a virus, that energy reserves are running down and out, that species decimation and environmental abuse are imperilling all larger life forms with global warming and so on, are beginning to pour off the press. Is the reader already yawning? Well, here is another, telling the same story with the same sober earnestness of a newly arrived explorer telling us all about the terrifying new terrain he has discovered.

He is right of course to do so, especially when influential intellectual magazines in Britain – *The Spectator*, *The New Statesman* and others – have still yet to cotton on to the realities of the world around them and continue to finance themselves with two-page advertising spreads of the latest car designs.



So what is new here from Colin Mason? Not much, if only because he insists on regarding symptoms as basic causative factors, so that the blurb claims he offers 'over 100 priorities for immediate action' when not one of them tackles the problem of people's powerlessness in mass societies. So how are these 100 priorities ever to see daylight? The author does not say.

THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD - A BACKGROUNDER ON INDIAN NGOS & PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS, by Walter Mendoza and John D'Souza. CENTRE FOR EDUCATION AND DOCUMENTATION. £10/\$15/250 Rupees.

 Reviewed by Ullash Kumar

WRITTEN by authors who have been actively involved with Indian NGOs for the past thirty years, this book attempts to chronicle the history of NGOs and people's movements. From the 1960s, with the birth and slow development of the voluntary sector, till today when many people feel that NGOs have lost their significance, the book not only gives an overview of various movements, but also looks at where this may have gone wrong.

RED HERRING

YOU sent me a book about Gaian Democracy (for review) and then publish two reviews of it by other hands. I take it you don't need a third. The pity is your two reviews recommended the book! In my view it is rubbish from start to finish and people should not be allowed to get away with useless red herrings.

Peter Cadogan

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GETTING THERE

AS USUAL the editorial and Spectator sections of *FWR* stimulate thought. I greatly value all those voluntary organisations, perhaps those which are purely frivolous such as bowls clubs, drama groups and country dancing parties, they are providing harmless leisure opportunities and so reducing the proportion devoted to television and shopping malls, while nearly all those 'causes', from Women's Institutes and beetle groups, directly help the local environment, and by their protest marches and petitions at least make the politicians aware that ignoring them will lose a few votes and

may help to curb at least a few of their worst excesses of road building, suburban sprawl and industrial incursion into the countryside

Long ago I even dared to argue with the great Schumacher that it was all very well telling us about the ideal society if he didn't give us any guidance about how to get there from here; to which he replied that his place was as the ideas man, and that he would leave others to work out how to implement them.

My observations over years of involvement in conservation and organic farming make me fear that even if we could wave a wand and find ourselves living in a world of independent communities we would have to be eternally vigilant about the seemingly irresistible tendency for organisations to coalesce into huge power bases.

Angela Bates

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HITTING THE SPOT

Please continue to send *Fourth World Review* – a refreshing point of view.

Paul

We have inhabited Earth for the last several hundred years as if Earth were ours to do with as we please; no restraints because we have believed that Earth and everything that goes with it is provided for the service and pleasure of humans. The new story tells us that that is just not so. We are a species among species, part of the life system, participating components of an enormously complex household. Humans have unique capabilities and unique responsibilities which only humans can fill, and must fill if things are to go right. In other words, humans have things they must do in order for Earth to function well. The human community and the Earth community form the single sacred community. We go together into the future as the single sacred community or we both perish on the way.

Thomas Berry

The Centre for Reflection on the Second Law

NIGERIA'S LESSONS FOR EUROPE**Dele Oguntimaju**

The author is a practising lawyer who lives and works in London; he is also a political activist involved with Nigeria's village development policies. This paper was first given to a meeting of the London Academic Inn.

NIGERIA'S post colonial history has been a continual tragedy of civil war, military dictatorships, massive corruption and the loss of millions of lives. Today negotiations are under way for a new constitution, but the reasons for its repeated disasters have their own resonance with the effort to promote the EUroplot.

I have no doubt that had the nationalities that make up Nigeria been asked whether they wanted to be bound together in an economic and political union, they would have said 'Thanks but no thanks'. But then again no one asked them, as a significant letter published in the *London Times* (15 July 1998) makes clear. Its author, Sir Peter Smithers¹, was a Principal Private Secretary at the Colonial Office through almost the whole decolonisation period:

'Sir, During the negotiations for the independence of Nigeria the view of the Secretary of State at that time, with which I agreed, was that in Nigeria we should attempt to put together a large and powerful state with ample material resources, which would play a leading part in the affairs of the continent and the world. This was attractive but it involved forcing several different eth-

nic and cultural groups into a single political structure.

'The negotiations were complex and very difficult, the chief problem as I remember relating, significantly, to the control of the police and the military. In the retrospect of 40 years it is clear that this was a grave mistake which has cost many lives and will probably continue to do so. It would have been better to establish several smaller states in a free-trade area.

'In exculpation it must be said that we did not then have the examples of the collapse of Yugoslavia and of the Soviet Union before our eyes. It should now be clear for all but the wilfully blind to see that it is extremely dangerous to force diverse racial and social entities into a single rigid structure such as that which is being built upon the foundation of the Maastricht Treaty. Recent history suggests that it would be best to complete the development of the Common Market and to call a halt to political integration in Europe.'

It is noticeable that the British Government has pledged to deny a vote to the British people on joining the Euro despite the fact, as *The Economist* reports, that 'more than 80% of voters say they want one'. Until I

¹ Sir Peter himself recorded in *FWR* No 115 his dramatic change of outlook after the development of the Nigerian Federation he helped to set up.

came across Sir Peter's letter, I thought I already knew the reasons why Nigeria does not work; I had come to believe the prevailing propaganda that the problem lay with the people, not with the concept; so I put it down to people's inexperience in working with democracy, to corruption and to tribalism. His letter made me realise that when democracy fails it is largely because economists and big men of money are not listening to people and instead are usurping the people's role with their own theories.

One positive outcome of the move to 'ever closer union' in Europe has been a better understanding of the tribulations of the Nigerian people as they were force-marched into a bogus political union. Before the quest for 'ever closer union' went into over-drive, few people in Europe understood that Nigeria, like Europe, is not a nation in the sense of a people with a common origin, tradition and language: There is no language called Nigerian. The word 'Nigeria' is nothing more than a geographical expression that describes the amalgam of a large number of smaller nations to be found in the delta of the River Niger (Niger-area). It is a man-made country, put together without regard to the historic identities of the distinct cultures, borders and languages of the ancient component nations.

Like the nations of Europe, the only factors the nations that make up Nigeria really had in common before their enforced political marriage was skin colour, geographical proximity and trade. The language of the Hausa, the Igbo and the Yoruba (to mention just the three largest of the 'Nigerian' constituent nations) are as distinct from each other as the language of the English, the French and the Germans. In fact, while the nations of Europe can look to Christianity

as a foundation for shared values, the nations of Nigeria had and still have no such common faith: while the nations in the south have largely embraced Christianity from the west, most in the north have embraced Islam from the east. Worse still, while the Christian half of the country has embraced western education, the Islamic half looks to Arabic instruction. This is the core of the disaster that is Nigeria, a country with one body and two heads: one facing east the other looking west.

Indeed, it is more like the mythical hydra with 250 heads, each writhing in contorted patterns and snarling at each other. No sooner do the unifiers and centralists who are trying to reduce the number of heads to one, cut off one head in the name of political union, it grows back again. The Igbos, who it was thought had been silenced by the Biafran War, are raising their voices again to complain of marginalisation. The Ogonis, who Abacha thought he had silenced by executing Ken Saro-Wiwa, are still demanding the right to control the exploitation of the oil that currently seriously pollutes their rivers and farms. The very malign and dominant forces thought they had successfully suppressed the Yoruba when they appointed a Yoruba stooge as President following the convenient death in prison of the Yoruba candidate chosen by the people. He had been jailed for refusing to give up his mandate, but the Yoruba are still agitating. Now even the North are complaining of being marginalized by the Yoruba President they had installed.

Super-nation concepts such as Nigeria and Europe are put together because small people, small communities and small nations are anathema to the world of global

column about the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (it sounds so pretentious as I say this title back to myself) is right up to the standard I expect from you, so you haven't lost it! No, it's the sense of frustration that tends to creep up on all of us, yet perhaps as deeply as may affect you. I say this because the more of real value a person has to contribute, the more deeply will the consequence of its not being accepted be felt.

From my own experience I report that two things have helped me to deal with frustration. The first has been working seriously with and for others, in fields unrelated to our world concerns, and even for no financial reward. I feel in retrospect that such activity has assisted me towards personal balance. The second has been reading and at times re-reading extracts from the works of Albert Schweitzer.

Alan Ecob

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SPIRITED

YOU very kindly sent me the latest copy despite my being seriously late with my subscription. Here is my contribution! It is a pleasure to read your spirited, inspiring words.

Madeleine Chappell

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SEAT BELTS

YOU made some very important points in your article in *The Individual* which I wish could be shared by our political leaders. However, you omitted one item about the force of government and that is forcing people to use a seat belt harness against their

will, in spite of the fact that such a device, while saving some, can also injure and even kill others.

No doctor would dare to force drugs, treatment, surgery or medical advice on a patient against their will, yet government is doing exactly that in violation of our constitution, which I assume is the same for individual rights in the UK. Your comments on seat belt harness laws would be appreciated.

Bill Holdorf

Wholdorf@msn.com

Thanks. I think no car should be driven without a man walking in front waving a red flag. – Ed.

REAL COMMUNITY

FWR No. 123, I read it cover-to-cover the day I received it! I especially enjoyed your first editorial and also your description of the place where you live. I would feel very much at home in your house! I grew up with simple living – during the Depression – and have been thankful for it ever since! And these days I often refer to it as the *best* of times.

Life *was* simple, and in many ways as yet unspoiled by the destruction of the environment, the pollution of the media, the inordinate greed of businessmen, or the venality of the politicians. I'm not saying there was none of this, but it was rare. And most importantly, there was real community. Everybody knew everybody and helped when there was a need.

I'm sure you've heard our Quaker phrase 'Live simply, that others may simply live.'

Keep up the good work

Barry Childers

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have recently suggested a new evolutionary reason for overpopulation.

Hares never over-populate. The highest density ever recorded, from literally hundreds of studies, was four per hectare, well below the food limit. Rabbits, on the other hand, often reach 200 per hectare, strip the land, and die of starvation. For years I regarded these as two extremes of a continuum; then in 1997 I analysed data for all the different rabbit and hare species worldwide, and found that the common wild European rabbit was way out on its own. In biomass terms, which allows for the range of body sizes, the rabbit reaches 330kg/ha, but none of the other 32 species exceed 40kg/ha.

An explanation suddenly clicked. The rabbit had been domesticated by monks for more than 600 years before it escaped to spread over Europe; none of the other species had ever been domesticated. So what does domestication do? It eliminates a wild animal's normal self-limiting behaviour by providing excess food and selecting for tameness to tolerate crowding. Many feral domesticated species are pests because they reach excessive abundance: goats, sheep, pigs, cattle, donkeys, cats and camels; domestic pigeons, doves and mallard ducks; and possibly even fish such as carp. Others accidentally domesticated include three kinds of rats, house mice and sparrows. Some human populations became domesticated with the advent of agriculture and are now expanding to their food limits, in contrast to the hunter-gatherer tribes whose numbers have remained stable for hundreds of years.

All the great religions appear to be moral codes of behaviour to maintain social

cohesion and tolerance of high density living. 'Love thy neighbour' leads to unlimited population increase. 'Hate thy neighbour' is the basis of natural population control below the food limit in wild animals and early humans. Hence the simple solution to the problem we face is to reverse the golden rule. This is happening already as society breaks down in over-crowded cities, street gangs return to primitive values, and, if human numbers are not checked in some way, the survivors (if any) of apocalypse will be those gangs. An ecological and more civilised way out of this dilemma would be to change the golden rule to 'Love thy environment as thyself'.

John Flux

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NO JOY!

AS FWR No. 123 came to hand yesterday I first read your editorial. I always do so because your views confirm mine and I enjoy the way you express them. Yet as I did so, I became concerned. The joy had gone. The English expression was not up to your usual excellent standard. Your closing sentence – all nine lines of it – was little other than a rant. It's not really you. Clearly, you are becoming unhappy from the frustration that results from endlessly saying the same thing to an audience which, although well-intentioned, has each his/her own perceived 'solution' which to a lesser or greater degree is obviously unsound. The word 'simultaneous' is a giveaway.

I realise from your Spectator soliloquy about your cat, dog and pleasant Cotswold cottage that you are aware of exceptional good fortune. And your piece in the same

commerce. The architects of these unnatural unions are not concerned with the human dimension to these exercises in genetic political engineering; for them people are simply economic units to be managed on the basis of abstruse reckonings related to economies of scale.

What they fail to understand is that the priorities and values of the world of business are, more often than not, diametrically contrary to our priorities as social creatures: while 'social man' sees (and wants to see) the world in all its colours and variations, business man sees the world as one. Profit is, after all, profit whether it is expressed in pounds, euros or dollars, and profits are best maximised through standardisation combined with critical mass. The holy grail of business is a mass market, with one currency, one language and a uniform set of laws.

It should be no surprise that super-nations like Europe and Nigeria are put together and held together not by the consent of the people, which is the glue of all natural unions, but by the desire of the business community for standardised and larger markets. The language of the corporate world and giantist enterprises is mergers and acquisitions, because bigger is always assumed to be better. But while growth through mergers and acquisitions may be a valid strategy for business, the social unit which refutes the organic principle is destined sooner or later to disintegrate. The British Empire, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Indonesia are all testimonies to this reality.

Part of the strategy used to undermine the true identities of people is to suck the most critical powers of self-government from their national governing bodies to an artificial supranational level, at the same time hiving down the remaining national powers into the hands of artificially created 'regions' within the nations. In this way 'the nation' becomes redundant as a focal point for allegiance. Brussels is currently pursuing precisely this strategy across Europe. On this basis 36 'states' have now been created in Nigeria, many with mixed nationalities, under the guise of promoting local democracy, although of course the real power has been centralised way beyond the effective power of the people to influence it.

What is left is a hollow and bogus democratic experience: at the local level where there is representation there is no power, and at the supranational level where the power lies there is no representation. What else can follow but discord, corruption and conflict? It is said that when elephants fight it is the grass that suffers. Nigeria's bitter and tragic experience indicates with singular clarity that when different nations are jockeyed into a single political structure it is the ordinary people that get trampled on in the ensuing and inevitable struggle for power. ■

Dele Oguntimoju's book, Identity and Development – Lessons from Nigeria for Africa and Europe, is published by The Economic Research Council, 7 St James's Square, London, SW1Y 4JU, at £10.

Just as most advertising today is disconnected to the realities of the product, political campaigns are disconnected from the reality of governing.

Charley Reese

FORUM

HOW?

AS a long-time associate and activist within the movement, my agreement with your main arguments will come as no surprise. You rightly point out that 'mass democracy is an oxymoron', and that 'power is not in citizen hands but in the hands of those controlling the central levers'.

But how do you propose that this situation be addressed? What precisely are those levers? Shall the people somehow wrest control of them, or do we abandon the machinery of our 'industrial and technological civilisation' in favour of a totally different kind of civilisation? If the former, how is that to be done; if the latter, what would that civilisation look like, and how do we proceed to bring it about?

You ask, 'How do we achieve a social order where ordinary people and the framework of their moral reasoning take precedence over boardroom judgements?' indeed, that is a question for which good answers have not been forthcoming, not even from our own Fourth World circles.

Here's the way I see it. Our social, economic and political structures emerge out



of the values, attitudes and beliefs that predominate within our culture. As these are changing, we are beginning to invent new structures that are consistent with that new spirit.

Ghandi's spinning wheel should not be taken as a literal alternative. It was symbolic of independence from colonial rule and exploitation, which is the real enemy, not industry, not technology, not organisation.

The Muslim world, after centuries of leadership in science, mathematics, and commerce, by their own admission missed the industrial revolution because of their rigid adherence to erroneous interpretations of their religious heritage. Yet they were correct in their rejection of some aspects of western money and finance, specifically the practice of usury and the antagonism of interests that is inherent in the roles of borrower and lender. Many Jews, Christians and Muslims are beginning to understand the economic and social reasons for the restrictions which each of their religious scriptures prescribe.

Money is primary among those levers of

power of which you speak. That is why I devote so much of my energy toward democratising the money power and dispersing it among the people themselves. But power is never given, it must be taken, not as an act of rebellion but as an exercise of one's faculties and talents in service to the greater good. But even tyrants believe themselves justified in their tyranny. They must be shown that it is no longer necessary.

No, this is not a panacea, but it is a fundamental necessity in changing the way we relate to one another and to the natural world that we are a part of.

Other structures that I see to be linchpins in the transformational process are those that relate to:

- ◆ land ownership and tenure;
- ◆ taxation and public revenue;
- ◆ government and law;
- ◆ corporate power; and
- ◆ technology choices.

I am aware that some progress is being made in each of these areas, but I leave it to others to elaborate. You can find some significant sources linked through our somewhat neglected CIRC website: (www.circ.home.mindspring.com). There are many more that should be added when time permits.

The most promising approach overall is the establishment of democratic, human-scale structures that operate in parallel with the dominant structures and gradually make them irrelevant. As the old order continues to shake itself apart, we should act with the greatest urgency to 'build our arks', yet we must also be wise enough and patient enough to await the rising tide that will enable a better way to prosper.

Thomas Greco

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ACORNS

I FIND I am still receiving your magazine in spite of not renewing my subscription. It seems to me that *FWR's* way of working on a (usually already well known) issue is, in the first place, to re-state the problem for the *n*th time; then to whine about it; and finally to belittle any attempt being made to solve it. I prefer to put my money and effort into nurturing acorns, in all sorts of ways. You are of course free to do otherwise – but please don't complain about a lack of mighty oaks.

BJ Fearnley

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It is true we do tend to go on a bit with the same hymn, if only because its point continues to be so generally ignored, so that many defective acorns tend to be planted which are never destined to become the mighty oaks we all seek.

Over the last three years we have projected or promoted a number of acorns, such as bioregionalism, A Real Communities Charter, Crisis Committees, A New Radical Strategy, A Charter of Real Nations, A Real Peace Initiative, The Academic Inn, Radical/Relocalisation, A New Road To Peace, and The Radical Consultation. The last named continues to reverberate in many ways. Do you feel none of these merit your concern? – Ed.

HATE THY NEIGHBOUR?

IN 'The heart of the matter' (*FWR* Nos. 121 & 122) Kirkpatrick Sale raises two fundamental questions of why we face apocalypse: Why did this happen, and how can we prevent it from happening again? The first is the vital question, because we can't cure the problem without understanding the cause. I agree with E.O. Wilson that overpopulation is the driving force; but I