

Fourth World News



A study of Oxfordshire farmers shows falling incomes by 50% and even 70%; more than 57% of farmers are aged over 50 and half of them expect to retire during the next ten years and do not expect a family member to take it on. • The boss of Shell oil, Ron Oxburgh, says that if we don't reduce or trap carbon dioxide from cars and power stations he sees very little hope for the world. • The UK government has rejected calls for special zones around residential areas to act as buffers against farm pesticides; it urges people either to stay indoors or to leave their homes as a precaution. • Believe it or not, Tony Blair is having talks with rival political leaders to see how polling predictions can be curbed after they predicted big gains for the UK Independence Party, UKIP. • Oil prices continue to rise to meet rising demand and declining stocks. The Road Haulage Federation is warning that any extra tax on oil will harm British industry. It makes no mention of freight prospect by rail. • 62,000 pupils were suspended from school in a single term in 2003. Main reasons: attacks on teachers and fellow pupils, drugs and booze. • Over a million people have been made homeless in the Sudan by military action and tribal conflict. Starvation and disease are rife. • US and British troops continue to occupy Iraq more than a year after the war 'ended'. • The Director-General of the Confederation of British Industry has attacked MPs for their failure to scrutinise EU laws. The EU now formulates more than half of the laws affecting British companies. • An electric fence is being planned around Big Ben to help deter terrorist attacks. • More than eight out of 10 doctors believe government

plans to tackle the superbug, MRSA, will fail. • A new breed of advertising is being developed: combat digital recorders which cut out adverts. 'Intelligent' split-second adverts will imprint images of products in people's minds. • A poll has highlighted anti-American feeling across the world. In Egypt, a supposed ally, 98% of people had a negative attitude towards America. • Despite continued promises from manufacturers and supermarkets to reduce the salt in processed foods, in many foodstuffs the salt level has actually risen. • The government's senior transport adviser wants parking costs in cities and towns to increase sharply to encourage people to travel by public transport. • Video games are being blamed for increasing juvenile crimes of violence. • The government is proposing to sell off UK post offices. Nearly a quarter of sub-post offices have already been sold. Long live the public interest and the local social infrastructure. • £10 billion is to be spent on an East-West London rail link. The government denies any connection with its bid to stage the Olympic Games in London. • Global warming is impelling many fruit growers in Southern England to switch to Mediterranean fruit such as peaches and apricots. • A government report declares the volume of motor traffic is already overwhelming many suburban areas. • Studies of 80,000 blood samples in Birmingham reveal the use of cocaine has trebled over last seven years. • Deputy Chief of Defence John Morrison says he and his colleagues reacted in disbelief when they heard Blair claim the Iraqi leader posed a 'serious and current threat to the UK'. – SAM HAINS

Fourth
World News



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

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KIRKPATRICK SALE

Erectus Consciousness:
Against Civilization



BOOKS SPECIAL ISSUE

Eight pages of reviews

Downsizing the USA, by Thomas H. Naylor & William H. Willimon
Reviewed by Peter Etherden

Editorial:

**AN ANSWER
TO TERRORISM**

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Editorial:	AN ANSWER TO TERRORISM	3
Feature:	Erectus Consciousness Part III KIRKPATRICK SALE	6
	Direct Democracy DOUGLAS SMITH	10
	The Legality of Independence THOMAS H. NAYLOR & WILLIAM H. WILLIMON	13
Forum:	Peter Cadogan Alan Ecob Bunn Ngara Howard Cheney Allan Bulla	15
Books:	Downsizing the USA THOMAS H. NAYLOR & WILLIAM H. WILLIMON Reviewer: Peter Etherden	18
	The Great Deception: The Secret History of the European Union CHRISTOPHER BOOKER & RICHARD NORTH Reviewer: John Papworth	20
	A Rough Guide to the UK Farming Crisis KATHRYN TULIP & LUCY MICHAELS Reviewer: Edward P. Echlin	22
	The Cosmic Circle – Jesus & Ecology Edward P. Echlin Reviewer: Allan Bula	22
	Imperial America GORE VIDAL Reviewer: John Papworth	23
	Who Runs This Place? The Anatomy of Britain Revisited ANTHONY SAMPSON Reviewer: John Papworth	23
	Reclaim the State: Experiments in Popular Democracy HILARY WAINWRIGHT Reviewer: Anna Chen	25
	The Vermont Manifesto THOMAS H. NAYLOR Reviewer: Peter Etherden	26
	Completing the Charm CHRIS WRIGHT Reviewer: Thomas Baring	27
Column:	FOURTH WORLD SPECTATOR	25
Item:	FOURTH WORLD NEWS	28

gramme in Cape Town, and so on. I had thought I was going to be the recipient of some radical Lithuanian folk wisdom and it only dawned on me slowly that he was an American, which of course explained everything; he is in fact a creature and an apostle of pure Californian freakery, who seems to peck around the landscape of the mind with the indiscriminate abandon of a chicken in a farmyard. David and Yuko had brought with them no less than six luxury cartons from a very superior London patisserie, but after a salmon salad for starters, followed by roast lamb and a medley of vegetables, nobody had any appetite for more and they left with them untouched in the fridge. I tried to take in Philip's views on God during the meal, but he is of a philosophical bent so profound one is apt to end up entertaining more questions than answers.

TALKING OF CHICKENS I now have a team of eight and I sell their organic, free range products to neighbours and friends. Despite being regularly fed they consume all my kitchen waste with the voracity of semi-starved victims of some political purge; they are really portable recycling units and when their laying bout is accomplished their Beethovenian *Ode To Joy* chorus is its own aural bonus. I first met Philip and Gloria about 25 years ago when Marcelle and I were advertising for home schooling for our three children; Gloria is an artist with the sort of eye for pictures which makes me hang on to her every judgemental word regarding those hanging on my own walls with the avidity of a malnourished artistic conscience. They introduced me to another artist, Natalie, a Russian princess, who painted my portrait. It makes me look like an archbishop who has just been sacked by

Tony Blair, but over the years I have become rather attached to it as I increasingly recognise its veracity and integrity.

A POEM FOR THE DAY sounds prosaic enough, but 'Poem For the Day' was a creation of my dear friend Nicholas Albery, who was so tragically killed in a car accident some years ago. I have always hated cars, I hate aeroplanes and airports in the same degree. God, how I miss him. Almost daily, as I follow the calendar of pages in his volume, I want to ring him up and ask him how he came to choose this or that particular poem. But we cannot talk, for he is gone, and he was only fifty-something. For many months, my wife and I took in Merlyn, his young son, who played with our children as part of our family. But that 'Poem For The Day' has helped me to learn and love poetry as might otherwise never have been possible. To say he 'edited' it is to downplay his role; for it is a work of art he has created from the art of others, so each day he tells a particular poem or some aspect or other of a particular poet's life. It is a work of art in its own right and it deepens and widens understanding in ways words are too weak to convey. Nicholas, how I love what you have done, how I love your spirit for it and how I love and cherish the memory of you. Now you are gone I come to see how noble you were, how I should have met and talked with you every day and treasured your talk and our meeting. But you are gone; your funeral in a woodland glade in Southern England meant little to me. A body in a straw-woven coffin conveyed little, like a storm on a neighbouring planet; but every day the poetry helps to bring you nearer and yet enlarges our separateness, makes the planets merge but sounds the tocsin ever louder that you are gone. ■

the boat. Margaret was sure that the nursery becomes a child's community where it learns social skills and finds security. I was not convinced, but the dispute calls a lot of things into question, not least the values of a society where young mothers feel under pressure to take a job. I wondered too about the importance of mother-child bonding and how such pressures help to undermine it. And I wondered too about the nature of a mother's feelings and pride about her infant and whether they ought not naturally to be all encompassing. In the end, the issues unresolved, I cheated somewhat by creating a distraction with some organic chocolate.

It was Margaret who reminded me that it was Shaka Zulu who solved the problem of war. Confronted with the constant problem of tribal conflicts erupting into violence he organised competitive dancing marathons; all the energies that had previously gone into killing and maiming now went into increasingly complex and frenzied tribal dancing. He was surely one of the world's greatest statesmen and one day perhaps a suitable memorial to his genius will be established, perhaps a Shaka Zulu Scholarship or an international public holiday.

MY DAUGHTER-IN-LAW Grace sent me not one, but two beautiful blue and white china teapots from Hong Kong. One was a one-cup affair with decorative dragons which I gave to my son-in-law, who rather conveniently runs a wine business in the city. I have hung on to the larger, with its decorative gape-jawed and bearded fish, because it entirely slots in with my breakfast regime. My politics may be radical, but my food is as conservative as a cauliflower; there is only one breakfast cup and saucer in the house, as distinct from mugs, and I claim it

for my own, so two cups of Earl Grey, a dash of milk but no sugar plus two slices of bread and jam (no butter) and that's it. The bread, like the jam, is my own make, organically grown, stone ground and wholemeal. The white stuff loading the shelves in the shops is a mystery to me and I wonder why the shop entrances do not carry a government health warning. But the new teapot just does two breakfast cups, and I am able to skim *The Times* and then do the non-cryptic crossword which I sometimes complete, and generally solve the chess problem at a glance. The cryptic puzzle defeats me utterly. A clue may be, 'The Merry Widow' and the next day the answer may be 'Alice in Wonderland' or 'Three Blue Mice', that sort of disjointed inconsequence. But they tell me some people actually solve it.

THE PILKINGTON'S came to dinner and brought a friend, David, and his Japanese wife, Yuko. They arrived just as I was grappling with a large tray of oven-hot roast potatoes and I had to tell them to shut up when they tried to greet me. (Memo: Cooking is an art, and the kitchen is the artist's studio.) We had a lively dinner and the conversation was dominated by talk about God, and by another guest with a Lithuanian family name. He spoke at top speed at a volume nobody could fail to hear and his God projections were so highly conceptualised that the Deity seemed to vaporise into the stratosphere. He bewildered me with talk of 'laboratories of the mind' on the internet and claimed he had a thousand and that the number was doubling annually. I tried to enquire their purpose or what they were doing, and again there was a high-speed and high volume vaporisation, with talk of software workshops, an Egyptian being funded for training in journalism, and an AIDS pro-

AN ANSWER TO TERRORISM

IT IS PART of the crisis of our times that public discourse is increasingly conducted with a vocabulary of emotive extremism in which 'terrorism', a word reeking of hysteria, has become an everyday buzzword, despite the extent to which its currency has been powerfully generated in the USA, the country which is one of its chief practitioners.

'Terrorism' is defined as 'government by intimidation', and we are being very slow to realise that it is this factor as much as any other which is prompting the worldwide wave of unrest which today is one of the main features of the human drama.

We are being slow to realise that what confronts us is an insistent and implacable demand for democratic government, and one reason for our languid response arises from a failure to grasp that democracy is a moral ethic which can only realistically operate where moral ethics, as distinct from power ethics, are the determinative force, and that this in turn is only possible on a small scale.

When it is not on a small scale it is the ethics of power which are dominant, making it inevitable that we are in the presence of government by intimidation, by terror-

ism. This holds however many ballot box exercises are staged, for on such a scale the power freaks, the terrorists, are the ones who set the agendas, who promote values (such as consumerism) which serve them rather than the public weal, who control the manipulative organs shaping public opinion, who control the money mechanisms, the investment (and armaments) programmes, the planning laws and much else besides.

Gullible reformers

It is the persistent belief of even many would-be radicals that the mere presence of the ballot box is an assurance that it can be used to achieve desirable social objectives, is an assurance that democracy prevails regardless of the scale being so large as to negate any prospect of it. It is this belief which is responsible for the prevalence of the forked tongue of Green power freaks, or liberal or socialist or communist ones, all waving imposing green or liberal credentials, regardless of the fact that the scale on which they are operating can only defeat any democratic objective.

All them overlook that it was a failure to recognise this which enabled Stalin to perpetrate his murderous assault on millions of

people in the former Soviet empire, all of course in the name of democracy. Those millions of ardent communist idealists who were shot or starved to death in arctic labour camps, as well as those victims of the infamous 'show trials' of the Thirties, who were tortured into making humiliating public confessions, were all victims of their own gullibility in believing that the power to vote ensured the prevalence of democracy, when the scale on which it was operating would itself make it impossible.

Mr Blair and other leaders of mass parties differ from Stalin only in that they can achieve power and hold on to it without the need for Stalin's domestic extremism, even if they do not hesitate to resort to it abroad; they have inherited norms of public procedure which cushion them (and us) against the consequence of power-imperative actions.

But it is a cushioning which is wearing thin, as the Iraq war and other events have helped to demonstrate, in a world where the prevalence of nuclear weaponry, prodigious assaults on the environment and the promotion of economic 'growth', regardless of any moral considerations, are still accepted as normal parts of the backdrop of all our lives. As the global crisis intensifies we can expect the cushioning to wear even thinner, not least as the degree of counter-terrorism provoked by terrorism becomes ever more desperate and militant. It will do so because the political structure of the modern world is itself a product of terrorism.

The dictionary defines a terrorist as 'anyone who attempts to further his views by a system of coercive intimidation'. How else were the people of Saxony, Prussia, Bavaria, the Rhineland and other sovereign

entities subsumed by Bismark into 'Germany'? Or the Piedmonts, Lombards, Tuscans, Colabrians, Sicilians and others subsumed into 'Italy'? How else were the diverse peoples of France, Spain, Russia and other countries submerged into giant single, uncontrollable political entities?

The same principle of terrorism, of coercive intimidation, was applied even more forcibly in establishing the former colonial empires. How else was the USA established in the teeth of the opposition of the native Ameri-Indian peoples?

Colonial terrorism

In many territories colonial powers sought to carve out giant, single, political entities by ignoring and intimidating the very identities of diverse local peoples. Everywhere they drew straight lines on maps which were, and are, expressions of terrorism rampant, and everywhere, as the democratic urge for freedom takes hold, people are fighting back to achieve their power of democratic self rule.

The Kashmiri and the Sikhs of the Indian sub-continent are at one with the Basques and the Catalans of Spain, the Ibos, Yourubas, the Lozis and the Bemba, the Matabele and many others of Africa and the Kurds of the Middle East. They are all, with countless other peoples in every part of the world, at one in their determination to achieve the age-old dream of freedom, and the world will never be free of counter-terrorism until the terrorism of giant entities such as the USA, the UK, China, Russia, India, Spain and elsewhere cease to oppress them.

This is the guts of the revolution of the 21st Century which even now is tearing the world apart. The answer is not, as the

crisis as they affect our local community it must echo some of those concerns. At present the group will have none of it. That, they argue, is some abhorrent contagion called 'politics'. It is enough to report village events and what innocuous local organisations may be doing.

In this they reflect of course the general attitudes and views of most of their readers. They are a decent, public-spirited group but their general view of the world is one which decades of dedicated journalistic spin-doctoring have been so successful in promoting. In light of the Astronomer Royal's recent declaration that human life has only a 50/50 chance of survival in the coming decades, I plead that the group's role should be one of responsible leadership rather than of passive followership as they cling to an outdated stance of passivity and acquiescence to whatever political mischief currently dominates the scene. But I am very much the odd man out, rather like the proud mother at the passing-out parade who delightedly boasts her son is the only one who is marching in step. So a sort of witch hunt is under way seeking to rid themselves of the constant discordance of this tactless turbulent priest; I am being asked to 'consider my position' as a member of the group. But there is far too much at stake even to think of quitting.

SOME RECENT VISITORS included my old mentor from over 30 years ago in Zambia. Canon Denys Whitehead is an Anglican missionary priest based in Livingstone and sadly crippled from a broken hip-bone, but the loving care of Margaret his wife is one of the illuminated pages in the Golden Treasury of human devotion which just makes one proud to be fellow member of

the human race. Margaret is a quite remarkable woman, she is an elected city councillor for Livingstone, chairman of the governing board of a local orphanage for child victims of AIDS, either infected or orphaned by a blight affecting about a third of the local population, and she is secretary of the local Rotary Club. A woman secretary! Rotarians do a lot of good work with their motto of 'Service Above Self' even though the cynics rather unkindly add 'but Business As Usual'. Rotary was a male preserve until a US court ruled that the exclusion of women was an illegal form of discrimination, so that another bastion of male dominance fell.

Their visit coincided with one from Marie and Andrew and there was a riveting discussion over dinner, (roast lamb, roast potatoes, runnerbeans, a mixture of squash, marrow, peppers and onions, and some curried lentils for vegetarian Denys, all the veg from my garden). Marie is not my daughter for nothing even though she works in the press office of the Anglican HQ, and was asserting and assertive that women should not be expected to sit at home minding the babies instead of having a job and outside interests, so that when a baby was six months old it was quite in order to place it in a nursery. This seems to me not at all in order, that motherhood is a supreme sort of business regardless, and that the baby must come first. I found myself at odds with both Marie and Margaret, with Denys and Andrew playing a largely listening role; Denys is a good listener, he has the features of a gentle sage, one who sticks to his last regardless of any contrary turmoil and who exudes an air of refined, benign tolerance at the tiller whilst the rest of the crew splash around and rock

FOURTH WORLD SPECTATOR



A VISIT TO JOHN SEYMOUR was an experience to treasure. I had intended to make it for his 90th birthday, and I assumed his Newport address was but a two-hour rail journey. But on the great day I discovered Wales boasts two Newports and his on the far west coast meant I had already missed the only train.

It was just as well, since 200 people had pitched up to do him proud. When I finally made it I had John to myself. Although his hearing and eyesight are giving him trouble, to say nothing of his plumbing, he was in fine fettle. When in hospital before his move from Ireland he could only take liquid food, so those lovely Irish hospital people were giving him liquidified eggs, bacon and chips. No wonder they have such a strong belief in fairies.

But he is in good hands and Ann, his daughter, one of nature's supreme creations by the way, was giving him the sort of love and care that would move a stone to tears. And Sally, his wife, was there too from Australia, still engaged with her quite superb pottery, which featured in one of his first books, *The Fat Of The Land*. That pot-

tery really is in quite a class of its own and when I saw it I hankered after a piece; when Sally gave me a lovely little milk jug I felt enriched, but then I left it in a bag on the train and lost property never recovered it.

But it was heartening to chat with this noble champion who never hesitated to enter the lists to champion the best and to challenge the base, whose grasp of events remains undimmed and whose comments are as pithy and as trenchant as ever; his published works alone (there are over 30 books), never mind his constant campaigns, have given him a unique place in the annals of the struggle for common sense against the surreal malignity of the forces of modern life, forces which are tearing the guts of civilisation to shreds. He helped me to found *Resurgence* in 1966 and has continued to support all my initiatives down the decades; but if now he is mainly an onlooker from the sidelines he will never cease to be an inspiration.

I AM IN RATHER A TIZZY with a local group which has recently revamped the parish magazine. I seek to assert that if it is to do justice to the lowering clouds of the global

American government appears to believe, in greater terrorism in a vain attempt to clamp the lid on people's dreams of democracy.

Even in the US heartland we hear of moves for secession in Vermont and California, moves which match those in the UK for Scottish, Welsh and Wessex independence. The age of an organically structured world of multitudes of small, self-governing entities is not of itself any guarantee that peace will prevail; what is certain is that it will never do so without it.

Artificial unities just do not work, which is why the USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia no longer exist. It is of course why the savage, impudent terrorism of Europe will not stick; the world is just not moving in the direction of giant and inevitably terroristic and ungovernable entities, but towards the human scale, the controllable, morally responsive and morally responsible entities, where human aspirations for decency, beauty and nobility stand some prospect at last of being globally realised. ■

We live in a surreal world where people who market cigarettes themselves announce on each packet that 'Smoking Kills'; where an elected Labour government is planning to privatise the Post Office, where despite the warnings by the Astronomer Royal that global warming is threatening human survival, all governments continue to pursue policies of economic growth and that the newspapers which convey this intelligence commonly run to 400 pages. So stand by for a Fourth World quote from a former US President of all people:

Nations crumble from within when the citizenry asks of government those things which the citizenry might better provide for itself. ... [I] hope we have once again reminded people that man is not free unless government is limited. There's a clear cause and effect here that is as neat and predictable as a law of physics: As government expands, liberty contracts.

Ronald Reagan (1911-2004)

40th US President

ERECTUS CONSCIOUSNESS: PART III: AGAINST CIVILIZATION

Kirkpatrick Sale

This is the third and last installment in this remarkable series on developing a consciousness that would remove us from the path to ecocidal destruction we are now embarked upon and provide instead a way of looking at the world that would be in tune with our basic inner nature as it was expressed for nearly two million years in our ancestor Homo erectus. Earlier sections dealt with Erectus consciousness as we can reconstruct it from the fossil record and how that remains, particularly in its attitude to nature, even now in certain tribes and movements and cultures, which it would be possible to emulate. This section focusses on the people who are forging an anti-civilization perspective and exploring the tools and mindsets of a primitive way of life.

SO FAR I have been suggesting that the consciousness of the natural world inherent in our predecessor, Homo erectus, was what was responsible for its long tenure on earth (some two million years) and is still available to us today if we are to halt our prideful, powerful rush to global domination and ecocide.

And I have shown that it is a consciousness that still exists in many individuals and groups, for in a sense, as Jung once said, 'every human being has a two-million-year-old man within himself'. It is this that informs and inspires such groups as the deep ecologists, the bioregionalists, the animal-rights activists, and many other parts of the leading edge of the environmental movement.

One other interesting force, out of the environmental movement as it is blended with modern-day anarchism, represents a direct philosophical challenge to the basic tenets of Western civilization, indeed of

civilizations of any stripe. It generally goes by the name of primitivism, though not all anti-civilization types would necessarily define that idea the same way, and for more than 30 years it has put out a string of articles and books (and set up a web site) that forthrightly attack civilization in all its guises, on the one hand, and just as forthrightly promote a 'primitivist alternative' modelled on prehistoric hunter-gatherers, on the other.

The dissent from modern civilization is of course long-standing, and with it have stood such people over the centuries as Schiller, Thoreau, Spengler, Morris and Mumford, but the present dissenters have assailed a whole array of civilization's underpinnings, from agriculture to industrialism, right to the level of some of its most fundamental modes of thought. John Zerzan, for example, an independent intellectual who has been primitivism's most ardent and articulate spokesman, has made scholarly critiques not only of domestica-

the dissident Thomas H. Greco, and all three members of Vermont's Congressional delegation voted against authorising Washington's American Empire to conduct military operations in Mesopotamia.


In 2013 Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island were cut off from the rest of Canada when Quebec finally negotiated her own independence. Meanwhile politicians from Vermont's Green Mountain Party met with colleagues from Maine and New Hampshire and invited representatives from Canada's Atlantic provinces to join them. In the spring of the following year Vermont's 250 town meetings voted to withdraw from the Union of 1791 and to enter a new six-nation Atlantic confederacy. To help the process, New Hampshire moved the Massachusetts state line 25 miles north and Maine told General Dynamics to go back to Fort Worth and take Bath Iron Works with it.

In 2027, when the people of Vermont celebrated the 250th anniversary of their independence from the British King George III in 1777, Acadia with its Denmark-size population of five million and its Swiss-style confederation was ranked number nine amongst the world's richest nations and number two on the broader quality of life scale. Vermont's capital Montpelier was the smallest on the American continent and the train ride to Montreal was considered the best in the world.

In 2003 Frank Bryan, co-author with John McLaughry of *The Vermont Papers*, remarked that 'Tom Naylor has made a serious case for an independent Vermont, a Second Vermont Republic that could immediately enter the world of nations and thereby begin the peaceful, democratic, and indeed moral process of disuniting the

United States'. Meanwhile in a review of the *Vermont Manifesto for Fourth World Review*, Peter Etherden had this to say by way of critique: 'Tom Naylor makes the mistake of dismissing an independent Vermont as no more than 'a new metaphor'. When Leopold Kohr published *The Breakdown of Nations* in the middle of the Cold War between the empires of the US and the USSR he was similarly dismissive of the real world's ability to adopt his ideas. I would like to believe that the good professor would have changed his tune after witnessing the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union and the rapid emergence of new democracies from behind Churchill's Iron Curtain.' In the light of these remarks, readers of *Fourth World Review* are advised to ignore Professor Naylor's natural academic caution and regard everything in this book review as a sign of things to come. What did you do to help make it happen, Daddy?

COMPLETING THE CHARM, by Chris Wright. NEW EUROPEAN PUBLICATIONS, London, £12.95; ISBN 1-872410-41-3.


 Reviewed by Thomas Baring
CHRIS WRIGHT would have you believe that this novel is about energy shortages, local empowerment and the crisis in education. In fact it so lightly touches on these issues that if you are interested in them, then this is not the novel for you.

However, if the reader would like a charming insight into the vicissitudes of family life, into a family at times at war with itself and the problems of balancing work and family life, then this really is for you. The reader might also become absorbed to find out if the hero manages to extricate himself from an affair outside his marriage. ■

vation starts from the ground up. She finds people are claiming the spaces they are offered as a right not a gift for which they should be grateful. In rundown estates across the country, in towns and cities such as Luton, Manchester and Newcastle people are showing how 'people power' could be organised if the government would only let it. As workers as well as users, they are also showing how greater local democracy is an alternative to privatisation as a basis for improving public services.

Wainwright investigates these English experiences against the background of growing international discontent with governments and corporations alike. The protest movement that has been stalking the elites of global capitalism from Seattle to Dohar is turning to alternatives and finding them in local efforts to create genuinely participatory models of democracy. While New Labour draws its lessons from the USA Wainwright's investigations highlight the lessons to be learnt from the South: for example the 'participatory budgeting' of cities across Brazil. The result is a book which provides imaginative and practical tools for building on these foundations and should be read by anyone interested in the future of democracy.

THE VERMONT MANIFESTO: THE SECOND VERMONT REPUBLIC, by Thomas H. Naylor. 128 pages; ISBN 1-4134-1308-0; orders@Xlibris.com; tel: 1-800-795-4274.

 Reviewed by Peter Etherden

IN 1981, Nicholas Albery and Anton Pinschhof, with some timely help from Jill Tweedie at *The Guardian*, arranged for 500 people to think about the breakdown of the USSR. This was one of two-dozen forums at

the first Fourth World Assembly convened by John Papworth. Meanwhile on the other side of the North Atlantic, Professor Tom Naylor from America's Duke University was busy 'consulting with Fortune 500 companies and governments in over 30 countries scattered throughout the world including the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe'. In another forum at the Fourth World Assembly, such distinguished guests as Ivan Illich and Kirkpatrick Sale were pondering the breakdown of the USA. Meanwhile over at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Studies a former US Ambassador to Russia, George F. Kennan, was worrying over whether 'bigness in a body politic is not an evil in itself'.

In 1993 when the US National Trust for Historic Preservation was designating the entire Green Mountain State of Vermont as one of America's most 'endangered historical places', George Kennan was writing that he regarded it as 'neither fanciful nor unjustified for us to hold in mind at this time the whole problem of the future development of the relationship with the northern parts of this country and their immediate Canadian neighbours'. Seven Vermont towns agreed and voted at their town meetings to secede from the Union. Meanwhile Tom Naylor was becoming 'disillusioned with big business, big technology, and the governments of both the United States and the USSR'.

In 2003, Tom Naylor, now a US television and radio pundit and co-author with William H. Willimon of *Downsizing the USA*, published the *Vermont Manifesto* and dedicated it to George Kennan. Meanwhile, Vermont Law School was judged to have the best environmental law programme in the country, the Vermont publisher Chelsea Green issued a book about local money by

tion, religion, psychiatry, postmodernism, progress, and division of labour but, at a deeper level, such cultural fundamentals of civilization as symbolic thought, language, numbering, art, and notions of time. 'Why,' he asked at one point,

would one respond positively to art? As compensation and palliative, because our relationship to nature and life is so deficient and disallows an authentic one. As [Henry de] Motherlant put it, "One gives to one's art what one has not been capable of giving to one's own existence." It is true for artist and audience alike; art, like religion, arises from unsatisfied desire.

And:

Number is the most momentous idea in the history of human thought. Numbering or counting...gradually consolidated plurality into quantification, and thereby produced the homogeneous and abstract character of number, which made mathematics possible. From its inception in elementary forms of counting ... to the Greek idealisation of number, an increasingly abstract type of thinking developed ... As William James put it, "the intellectual life of man consists almost wholly in his substitution of a conceptual order for the perceptual order in which his experience originally comes."

More generally he has charged:

Genetic engineering and imminent human cloning are just the most current manifestations of a dynamic of control and domination of nature that humans set in motion 10,000 years ago, when our ancestors began to domesticate animals and plants. In the 400 generations of human existence since then, all of natural life has been penetrated and colonised at the deepest levels, paralleling the controls that have been ever more thoroughly engineered at the social level. Now this trajectory can be seen for what it really is: a transformation that

inevitably brought all-enveloping destruction that was in no way necessary.

Interestingly, the prize-winning novelist Daniel Quinn has come at much this same critique with his highly entertaining character Ishmael, a talking gorilla, whose analysis of 'the Takers' – civilization, in effect – runs this way:

As I make it out, here are four things the Takers do that are never done in the rest of the community, and these are all fundamental to their civilized system. First, they exterminate their competitors, which is something that never happens in the wild ... Next, the Takers systematically destroy their competitors' food to make room for their own. Nothing like this occurs in the natural community ... Next, the Takers deny their competitors access to food ... [Their] policy is: Every square foot of this planet belongs to us, so if we put it all under cultivation, then all our competitors are just plain out of luck and will have to become extinct.

And then his human pupil finally sees the light:

I no longer think of what we're doing as a blunder. We're not destroying the world because we're clumsy. We're destroying the world because we are, in a very literal and deliberate way, at war with it.

No surprise that Quinn's first book after his Ishmael novels was entitled *Beyond Civilization*.

The 'primitivist alternative' to the deadly mess of civilization is essentially based on the anthropological and paleoarchaeological work that began to emerge in the 1960s, highlighted by the 'Man the Hunter' conference at the University of Chicago in 1966, transforming the picture of prehistoric cultures from ones of hardship, deprivation, toil, and sickness, 'nasty,

brutish, and short', into ones of ease, comfort, sufficiency, well-being, and peace, 'the state of nature'. (It is only right to add that not only is the title of the conference, and subsequent book, sexist, but quite inaccurate, as in many ethnographic societies – among them the Mbuti, Inuit and Tiwi and Agta of the south Pacific – women do a fair share of the hunting.) Since then the bulk of the scholarly literature has reinforced and sharpened that picture, more or less summed up in the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers* in 1999, and it is that work that informs most of the ideas of what a desirable primitivist society would look like. Marshall Sahlins, for example, an anthropologist whose Stone Age Economics has been highly influential in the field and out, has described what he has called 'the original affluent society':

Hunting and gathering has all the strengths of its weaknesses. Periodic movement and restraint in wealth and population are at once imperatives of the economic practice and creative adaptations, the kinds of necessities of which virtues are made. Precisely in such a framework, affluence becomes possible. Mobility and moderation put hunters' ends within range of their technical means. An undeveloped mode of production is thus rendered highly effective.

And they do it on 'a mean of three to five hours per adult worker per day in food production'. And as to poverty:

The world's most primitive people have few possessions, but they are not poor. [His emphasis.] Poverty is not a certain small amount of goods, nor is it just a relation between means and ends; above all it is a relation between people. Poverty is a social status. As such it is the invention of civilization.

It is from this kind of scholarship, which has multiplied in recent years, that primitivists have taken support for the possibility of current alternative living. 'Mounting evidence', says Zerzan,

indicates that before the Neolithic shift from a foraging or gatherer-hunter mode of existence to an agricultural lifeway, most people had ample free time, considerable gender autonomy or equality, an ethos of egalitarianism and sharing, and no organised violence. Archeologists continue to uncover examples of how Paleolithic people led mainly peaceful, egalitarian, and healthy lives for about two million years Ever-growing documentation of human prehistory as a very long period of largely non-alienated life stands in sharp contrast to the increasingly stark failures of untenable modernity.

Some sections of the primitivist movement have even attempted to put some of these lifeways in effect. There are at least 100 organisations that offer instruction in primitive living – the Teaching Drum Outdoor School in Wisconsin's North Woods, for example, offers a year-long course in skills for survival in the wild – and in such ways of the American Indians as the vision-quest, by which youngsters were initiated into adult society by going alone on a fast into the wilderness and becoming so thoroughly immersed with nature that they would take their subsequent names from an animal or object that they bonded with. A Society of Primitive Technology, begun at the Schiele Museum of Natural History in North Carolina in 1989, now has affiliate schools in 30 states (and Canada and Mexico) that teach 'wilderness living and survival', and a bi-annual bulletin that has reports on making and using all kinds of Stone Age tools, including atlatls, bows and

concentration of global power he does not venture to say.

On the second factor, that of the ever enlarging bubble of power in Brussels, he displays a blind spot. This may be because he is a member of the Liberal Democratic Party, which, like the other two of the big three, gives full backing to the Brussels exercise regardless of what party members may think. It is one of the more surreal aspects of political life today that despite the lack of any popular desire to unite 'EUrope' and the increasing majority opposition, not one of the leaders of the big three dare oppose it! Despite the way so much British law has already been undermined or negated by Brussels enactments and the way the same force is seeking to create a vast new federal state, he devotes only two pages to it in his final chapter.

He does not dwell on how Parliament has proved incapable of arresting this piecemeal demolition of British sovereignty, even though in his foreword he declares how on returning to Britain he was 'struck by the growing imbalance between the new global powers and the counterweights of democratic controls, whilst British governments themselves were becoming less accountable'.

What he fails to see is that attempts to restore parliamentary power can only restore the *status quo ante*, which was the springboard for its subversion in the first place, and that if government by the people is to be made a reality it involves a quite determined effort to decentralise government by enabling local people at village or parish level to run local affairs such as schools, hospitals, social services and so on themselves.

But if the reader wants a graphic and detailed picture of how power is being exer-

cised in so many ways currently beyond people's power to control, or even beyond their perception, this book is as first rate and indispensable a guide as can be found.

RECLAIM THE STATE: EXPERIMENTS IN POPULAR DEMOCRACY, by Hilary Wainwright. VERSO, ISBN 185984 689 0; £15 hardback.

Reviewed by Anna Chen

'COMMUNITY' and 'community involvement' is increasingly the government's seductive theme tune. Number 10 has declared that the notion of community will be at the centre of the New Labour's bid for a third term. It is the basis on which ministers sell controversial policies such as foundation hospitals and city academies. It is talked about as the key to improving public services. It is held up as the source of public virtue, against the 'vested interests' of public sector workers. Hilary Wainwright puts New Labour's rhetoric of community involvement under scrutiny: the scrutiny of practical experience, at home and abroad.

She finds that all too often government policy offers 'community leadership' with one hand, and takes it back with a series of centrally imposed targets or financial constraints on the other. Tony Blair's promises of decentralisation in practice turn out to be hollow. 'The community', however, is not a passive victim in this process. Neither is it as separate from the people who work on the front line of our health, education and local government services as the government would like to think. In *Reclaim the State*, Wainwright sets out on a quest to discover how people are creating new, stronger forms of democracy to defend and improve public provision in their localities. What motivates her is the belief that political inno-

Parliament governed in the name of the sovereign and that, subject to some revisionist scrutiny of the House of Lords, it enacted laws which were executed by different ministries or enforced by the judiciary. It is a theory which the author explodes in one chapter after another, making it clear that it has very little resemblance to reality.

In every case except, one must say, that of the House of Windsor, an ethic of service has been largely replaced by an ethic of greed for money and power. The professions now languish because of the money-bag allurements of the private sector where directorships are going for salaries treble or quadruple those of the top academics or lawyers. The lawyers anyway are not doing too badly; thanks to 'legal aid' (£7,848 million in 2000) and increased litigation, the number of solicitors has nearly quadrupled in a mere 20 years and so have their individual earnings.

Senior civil servants develop their own strong ties with contracting firms and on retirement are often found sitting on the boards of companies with which they formerly negotiated.

The voice of the people was assumed to find expression in membership of political parties. Now these parties are faced with steadily declining memberships and party leaders have become heavily dependent on huge donations from wealthy backers. The people are aware something is amiss, rival party leaders are clearly singing from much the same hymn sheet under the baton of hidden but powerful maestros, they are out of tune anyway whilst the words are the product of professionalised spin doctoring that seem to relate to events on another planet. So increasingly John and Jane citizen are ceasing to vote at all.

The bleak fact is that they are right. A 100% turnout of the voters would do nothing to change the distribution of power in Britain today; power would still be in the hands of a diversity of particular groups who own or run manufactory industries, food, drug, transport and service industries, TV stations, government ministries, the insurance world and so on.

In his closing chapter the author appears to put his trust in a reinvigorated parliament and in doing so reveals some of the limitations of his own outlook. He sees clearly that the most pronounced change in UK life has been the massive increase in centralised governmental power coupled with the enormous concentration of financial, mercantile and industrial power into fewer and fewer hands. In many ways, which he details with admirable and perceptive clarity, far from Parliament governing the private sector it is the latter which is largely shaping and conditioning how government operates.

There are two other factors at work here. One is the incredible internationalisation of company operations which has erupted into gigantic dimensions only over the last two decades. Vast swathes of UK stock exchange companies are now owned and run, in whole or in part, by foreign nationals, and in a riveting chapter he vividly describes some of the imposing realities encompassed by the current buzzword, 'globalisation'.

In its onward march the market is no more a respecter of national than it is of ethical or environmental boundaries and has become a dominant global force to which every elected knee now must bow. Just how a reinvigorated role for parliament will assert itself against this massive

boomerangs. Attachment to such archaic technology has not prevented it from launching a web site (Primitive.org), nor a similar group from establishing a Primitive Technology homepage that lists 68 linked groups.

Natural existence

I know of no group of primitivists who have attempted to establish an on-going Stone Age community of an immediate-return or even full-scale hunter-gatherer type, but then if such a one existed it would likely not wish to have any contact with (or website for) the rest of the corrupting world. There are a great many individuals, though, who live along the gradations to a primitive lifestyle, using Stone Age tools (and often making them for sale), hunting for food and clothing, living in earth lodges or teepees, making friction fires without matches, weaving baskets and nets, collecting edible wild plants, growing simple vegetables, and/or foraging roadkill. Some may be trying to prove a point in a political sense, but it seems that most are just living the way their bodies and souls tell them is the healthiest and most satisfying. Says one man who lives in the woods on the banks of the Hudson River, 'I'm doing it because I want to live a natural existence outside, and because North American Indians perfected the system of living outdoors on the North American continent. On this landmass at this latitude, I chose the practices best suited for living.'

Sounds very Erectus to me.

There is no going back to Eden. Once we have learned of evil as well as good, for which we were expelled, and learned to create the tools that enabled us to carry it out,

we cannot entirely abandon them or the habits of thought that accompany them.

But in evolutionary terms, what we have developed now as modern civilization has lasted a mere blip in time, and it is has had very little real depth of influence on our basic hominid nature. Underneath the veneer is a Stone Age mind and a Stone Age heart, and it may still be our guide today, leading us toward a saner and more harmonic world in which the human is in balance with the rest of nature.

For we cannot, we will not, go on as we are. In the first place, every civilization that has ever existed has collapsed, and ours will be no exception, because civilizations carry out an iron imperative of ecological destruction, especially intensified by agriculture, combined with social incoherence, especially intensified by hierarchy. Moreover, our particular industrial civilization has developed technologies that enable us to hasten that destruction and incoherence to a degree unimaginable to any preceding one, with consequences so catastrophic that the future of a great many surface species, including the dominant bipedal one, is problematic. And even if in the next decade or two we do not succeed in altering the climate and atmosphere and befouling the soil and water and air in such a way as to imperil life on earth, there is every reason to expect (as a Pentagon report of February 2004 predicts) a conjunction of crises that will create havoc, war, starvation, disease, and death on a wide scale in every land on earth and bring our civilization crashing down around our heads.

It is then that we will need the wisdom of the Erectus and the skill of the Sapiens, our Stone Age hearts and minds, to survive. ■

DIRECT DEMOCRACY

Douglas Smith

Britain has fallen out of love with conventional politics. Could Swiss-style direct democracy end its current crisis of political legitimacy? The author is founder of C-Change.

POLITICIANS tell us that they are concerned by the declining turnout in elections. They bemoan the failure of contemporary politics to engage the public. They commission reports to find an explanation for this alarming trend. They spend large sums of our own money to persuade us of the importance of voting.

But they studiously, even perversely, fail to face up to the crushingly obvious truth: people won't vote because it's an outdated, ineffective and crude way of deciding how our affairs are run.

In Britain we've had a universal franchise for many decades. When it was first granted, a large majority of the population was uneducated. Many people thought that it was better to leave the complicated matter of running the country to an elite of wise men. After all, if they made a mess of things they could be ejected from office after five years.

This was a questionable proposition even in the early 20th Century. Yet that is still how we organise ourselves. Every few years we are expected to give a leasehold on power to a cabal of professional politicians. If we don't like them we can wait until the next election and bring in another bunch.

Half the UK population now goes into further education. Thanks to the rapid

development of communications technology we have a highly informed citizenry. All of us are used to making decisions of importance in our own lives on a day-by-day basis. Why on earth do we persist with this self-denying system that prevents us from controlling society ourselves?


Some commentators claim that we don't really care about politics in this country. So why did a million people march in central London last February against the looming war in Iraq? Half a million walked on the issue of hunting. People sign petitions on issues ranging from local planning to the euro all the time. Are these individuals content with the way they are governed and with the quality of decision making in this country? When people feel disempowered they can go in one of two directions; they can become energised, sometimes even resorting to violence; or they can become cynical and apathetic. Currently, it is the latter course that is predominant in the UK, but for how much longer? There is no obstacle preventing us from transforming the way we decide public policy in this country, apart from the ingrained resistance of those who have had monopoly control over power for so long – the politicians. To break that monopoly we need, as a first step, to adopt the Swiss system. In Switzerland there is a high degree of decen-

planets to accommodate us.'

The current extreme surge of materialism clashes violently with Dr Echlin's belief that we are simply here to let the earth shine forth with the glory of God. He thinks all things are created and cohere in, through and for Jesus of Nazareth, who was the image of the invisible God. As an ecologist, Echlin fears for the health of the earth community, by which he means plants, animals, soil, water, trees and climate. He writes, 'As awareness of earth abuse gradually increases, even among politicians and journalists, so paradoxically does relentless – and avoidable – exploitation.' The fragility of our earth and its limits make him hope for much from the minority of people, fortunately growing, who are engaged in earth care.

Thus, although his fears are great, so are his hopes. He concludes, 'If, as Barbara Ward said, we listen to the wise people and prophets among us, we may yet avoid the extinction of which they warn.'

IMPERIAL AMERICA, by Gore Vidal. CLAIRVIEW BOOKS, 2004, £9.95, ISBN 1-902636-56-2.

 Reviewed by John Papworth


VIDAL is a great man of letters and has the wonderful power to arrest interest in almost anything he has to say; but his mindframe is essentially 19th century.

He writes of empires, power blocs and political upheavals from a stance that assumes that the behaviour of giant power structures is susceptible to any degree of moral persuasion or response at all.

He has failed to grasp that morality is a function of personal relationships, that where these are ignored or denied in having any effect on the political process, then

all that matters is the play of power devoid of any moral content at all. So, in a series of brilliant essays, he sounds off like a pre-Blairite socialist, with no awareness that he can have no serious effect on the play of power at all. A good man fallen among Fabians.

WHO RUNS THIS PLACE? THE ANATOMY OF BRITAIN REVISITED, by Anthony Sampson. JOHN MURRAY, 2004, ISBN 0-7195-6564-2.

 Reviewed by John Papworth

IT IS rare to read a book on politics, on contemporary politics at that, which is quite unputdownable, even if it is devoid of gossip and accounts of intrigue and backbiting among rival personalities.

The author's concern is expressed in the title; who indeed does run Britain? His quest for an answer leads him through both Houses of Parliament, the monarchy, the political parties, the unions, the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Whitehall, the Treasury, the diplomatic and the secret services, and the defence ministry-cum-industry, and then on to the professions – lawyers, academics, journalists and media people, as well as the money world, accountants, corporations and directors.

The picture which emerges is really rather frightening; whoever is running Britain it is certainly not the people. The House of Commons has largely taken second place to the TV studios, the House of Lords is a creature not of landed opulence but of prime ministerial patronage, neither representative of nor responsible to the electorate.

There was once a theory, (whatever has happened to it?), that the people elected the members of their Parliament, that

as the monstrous stench of subterfuge and corruption continues to ooze from the bowels of Brussels.

Not the least of the results of this European exercise is the way it has poisoned the sacred chalice of public truth to such extent that today it is impossible to believe a word emanating from any of our leaders. We do not know how, but somehow reality does filter down to the general consciousness, so that the evil effects of this massive practice of deception engenders cynicism and double dealing to become in turn the norm of general behavioural response in the citizenry at large as standards of personal conduct visibly wilt.

This invaluable tome gives chapter and verse of the whole range of murky subterfuge and betrayal that has made the Europlot a byword for infamy, hollow posturing and corruption of the vitals of the political process. It should find a prominent place on the bookshelf of anyone who cares.

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

Reviewed by Edward P. Echlin

THIS useful booklet (52 pages) describes our farming, food and countryside takeover, and offers some solutions. Or perhaps better, some ways of proceeding. Our context 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 taxpayers. 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 Tesco's CEO's pre-tax salary was £2.46 million. The average farm income was £10,100.

Very important for our way of proceeding is localisation; local growers, food, retailers, abattoirs, farmers' markets, boxes, and replanting uprooted orchards. The authors' prefer 'food sovereignty' or 'food democracy' to 'food security' because, they say, more than quantity is necessary. However, they should also note Britain's (and Ireland's) present variety of the Lumpers potato monocrop. Our monocrop is fossil fuel driven imports to our islands without contiguous borders, a great hunger waiting to happen. If import dependent islands aren't food insecure who is?

THE COSMIC CIRCLE – JESUS & ECOLOGY, by Edward P. Echlin. THE COLUMBIA PRESS, 160 pages; Dublin £5.99.

Reviewed by Allan Bula
EDWARD ECHLIN is one of our leading voluntary environmentalists and this new book is his sixth and, he says, last. Besides writing, he grows organic fruit and vegetables and has a special interest in local fruit varieties. Furthermore, he is a theologian who relates Jesus Christ to the earth.

He thinks we consume too much: 'At present rates of consumption of non-renewable, and even renewable, resources, we would need two or three additional

tralisation. The country is divided into a series of 26 cantons, historic regions with distinct identities and a high degree of autonomy from the federal government. The one-size-fits-all centralisation of the English or French model is inconceivable to the Swiss. Switzerland's cantons have the freedom to innovate and to learn from each others' successes and mistakes.

The other great strength of Swiss democracy is that citizens have the right to call a referendum on any subject they want, providing they can gather enough signatures. For example, any new law brought before the Federal Assembly (the Swiss parliament) can be challenged by the voters before it is enacted. If enough people don't like a measure they can call a referendum and throw the law out.

But the democratic rights of Swiss citizens don't end there. If 100,000 signatures are collected within an 18-month period then a proposal can be proactively put on the ballot paper and voted on by the general public. If it is passed, then it becomes law. This is direct democracy in action. Thus, in 1990 there was a referendum on a grassroots proposal for a 10-year moratorium on the construction of nuclear power plants in Switzerland. Despite the pro-nuclear stance of business and the establishment, the public voted by a 55 per cent majority in favour of the measure. This stunning example of people power could not have happened in the UK because the government wouldn't dream of allowing an 'ignorant' public to interfere with its plans. Switzerland's population is approximately 7,500,000, so it takes 1.3 per cent of the population to initiate a referendum there. If the UK adopted the same method then we'd need roughly 900,000 signatures. That

would radically transform our politics. Not only would we be able to stop many bad things from happening; we'd also be able to kick-start positive changes. The whole process of calling a referendum would ensure more widespread and much better informed debate. A recent instance of this actually happening in the UK was the vote on whether or not Stoke-on-Trent (not an area noted for enthusiastic democratic participation) should have a directly elected mayor. As a result of the debate on the principle and the election itself the city ended up with a most unexpected result; a gay advice centre worker who ran as an independent was elected: he has become a notably successful mayor. Without the initial referendum none of this would have been possible.

In the US many states have a system of so-called 'propositions', whereby citizens can put measures they support onto the ballot for the next set of elections. Those who suspect that reactionary populists and big business dominate such votes should look at the record. There is no ideological colour to successful initiatives, everything depends on local circumstances and effective campaigning.

The fear of the vulgar mob – best expressed in this country by the cultural disdain of the liberal middle classes for readers of *The Sun* – is the most effective weapon in the armoury of the political elite. 'My God,' they incant, 'imagine what they would vote for if we gave them the chance.' Dividing the general public into mutually suspicious blocs is such an obvious trick that it's amazing that anyone falls for it, but there are still plenty of broadsheet columnists who like nothing better than to list their readers' most hated measures and

then assure them that they would be enacted the day after Britain adopted direct democracy.

Such scaremongering becomes even more absurd when we take the concept down to the local level. At the moment councils make all kinds of decisions, many of them contrary to the wishes of the people they represent. If Sainsbury's or Tesco is granted planning permission to build a large out-of-town hypermarket because key councillors have had their egos (or wallets) plumped up, and if John Prescott (the minister with responsibility for planning) happens to agree (he usually does), then there is absolutely nothing that the local citizens can do about it. Why not allow those who live, work and shop in the areas affected by such schemes to have the final say? The supermarket boss wouldn't like the idea, but the rest of us would.

There's a further measure that could truly turn the tables on the politicians. It's called a recall vote. Pioneered in California, it allows voters to petition for the removal of a failing and discredited politician. If they get the required number of signatures (900,000 out of 15 million registered voters in California) then the people can have a ballot and sack the person they chose in the first place. Famously, Arnold Schwarzenegger became governor of

California last year after voters recalled the incumbent, Gray Davis, who was widely blamed for incompetent handling of the state's energy crisis. What a fabulous antidote to governmental arrogance that would be if it were applied in Britain.

These proposals are reasonable. They provide a way of dramatically increasing participation in politics. Furthermore, they offer a safety valve – not just for those who get their way, but also for those on the losing side of the referendum. To be told by the majority of your fellow citizens that they honestly disagree with you is a lot less galling than to be ignored, ridiculed and marginalised by tinpot politicians with the same level of education as the rest of us and only a fraction of our common sense. There's a very simple way to decide whether direct democracy is a good idea. Go outside. Walk around. Look at people going about their business. Do they look evil to you? Do they excite your fear and loathing? Of course not. They are ordinary and decent, just like you. Then come back in and switch on your TV. Watch the professional politicians performing in Parliament. Which lot do you trust more?

With acknowledgements to The Ecologist, Unit 18, Chelsea Wharf, 15 Lots Road, London SW10 0QJ.

In Switzerland the primary responsibility for social welfare rests with its 26 cantons and 3,020 communes. Ninety-five per cent of all Swiss citizens are insured against illness by one of the 400 private health insurance funds. Swiss children are taught in public schools the virtues of self-sufficiency, hard work, co-operating and loyalty to family and community.

Thomas Naylor
Downsizing the USA

stage consulted, they were simply pawns in the struggles of rival European powers bent only on expansion and self-enrichment.

The European 'powers' were themselves the product of political bully-boys such as Bismark, who proceeded to wipe out the traditional political entities of Saxony, Mecklenburg, Hesse, Bavaria, Munster, Wutenburg, Nassau Brandenburg and numerous others to create the great monster 'Germany', which led directly to two world wars, just as the European army, even now being foisted on the peoples of Europe, will lead inevitably to even greater global wars and more massive economic ruin. Well, where are those imperial empires today? They belong to the dustbin of history just as this colossally fraudulent exercise in presumptuously arrogant and greedy re-enactment of colonial arrogance will end.

If the book has a weakness it is in its failure to explain just what were the forces that Monet and others have been able to mobilise to advance the entire plot. Who were the powerful, monied top-side people on whom he could rely for backing as he cajoled, promised and threatened top politicians to go along with him? The people who voted for the party politicians knew nothing of the plot, they had never asked for Europe and it featured in no party policy statements or election propaganda, yet almost the first act of Edward Heath on becoming Prime Minister was to apply for membership of the Common Market, a step he knew full well would lead to the eclipse of British sovereignty in a federal Europe. For lesser forms of treason in former times traitors have been publicly hung, drawn and quartered. Edward Heath received a knighthood.

It is an indice of the power these hidden

forces continue to wield that from Margaret Thatcher onwards they have managed to unseat every successive British conservative prime minister and leader, so that today, despite the massive public opposition to the plot, not one of the leaders of the three main political parties dare openly oppose what is afoot.

Yet there are many innocent, gullible souls who ardently support it; in their innocence they believe they are in the realm of high moral purpose, who believe it is a matter of winning democratic support for what they fondly believe is the cause of peace, co-operation and economic development.

They are blind to the realities portrayed in minute detail in this magnificent book, blind to the fact that they are being led by the nose, that morality simply does not enter this abominable war-making and economic catastrophe-making exercise; they do not see they are in the realm of power, power deployed with an utter disregard for decency, for veracity, for democratic principle, or for the kind of trust people ought to be able to place in those who presume to lead.

But the plot will fail. It is built on a supposed need for economic growth when every muscle should now be strained to reduce industrialised processes if civilisation is not to perish; it is based on plans to build a giant European war machine, all in the name of peace of course, and it is built on degrees of deception, corruption, power-mongering intimidation, the abjuration of truth and honour, and the devastation of decency in public life on a scale that has no parallel in human experience. It will fail if only because the reign of falsehood, mendacity, dishonest dealing and perfidy is always transient. Ultimately the truth will out, made all the more vivid and resonant

old Soviet Union, the United States is a thriving 'going concern' with plenty of highly desirable assets. Any state's share of such public federal assets as land, forests, mineral reserves, waterways, highways, buildings, military bases, military hardware, gold reserves, foreign currency reserves, US government loans, etc., would cover their share of the national debt many times over. So the problem is a financial one and not an economic one. After the final state had freed itself from the union, the federation's residual assets would provide a substantial windfall gain for America's citizens. Packaging assets and liabilities is what Wall Street does, so after disunion this would give them something to do and keep them off the backs of ordinary people so they could get on with the job of running the real economy. The clever people who can invent Kyoto pollution voucher exchanges and Enron energy markets are unlikely to be daunted by the idea of a Federal Assets Trading System.

In *Creating New Money* Robertson and Huber included a chapter that addressed the question of their scheme's potential opponents and beneficiaries and the nature of the triggers and constituencies for change. There is no comparable discussion in *Downsizing the USA*. With disunion the military industrial complex would be one of the big losers and the money power another. What the money creation and distribution system created it can also destroy. As Tom Paine pointed out, God made man and woman, not rich and poor. Empires built by man can be dismantled by man. Eastern Europe and Mesopotamia provide abundant how-to data. *Downsizing the USA* gives a good idea of what is feasible and why it is desirable. It is a good place to start

our journey to a sane humane future for the peoples of North America.

THE GREAT DECEPTION: THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, by Christopher Booker and Richard North. CONTINUUM PUBLISHERS, 2003. ISBN 0-8264-7108-6.

Reviewed by John Papworth

THE title might suggest an emotional propaganda tract debunking EUrope; the book is in fact an intellectual *tour de force* of scholarly reasoning, backed by copious notes or quotes for almost every assertion made or conclusion drawn. For the first time the ordinary reader has access in a single volume to as full an account as he is ever likely to get of just how the plot originated, how it was launched and the multiple forms of deviousness, deceit and calculated lying that has accompanied its growth down to the present day.

The plot, it is quite impossible to view in any less accurately descriptive terms, is very much the product of mediocre minds steeped in the values and attitudes that were commonplace two centuries ago when European 'statesman' were using the transient technological headstart they possessed to build empires and to subject entire populations across the world and their cultures to the limitations of their unprincipled power-mongering. They persuaded themselves they were advancing civilisation when in fact they were destroying it, just as the EUroplotters are doing today, using people's yearning for peace and decent progress with cold-blooded effrontery to abort both.

The subject peoples of the European colonial empires did not want the new order which assailed them, they were at no

THE LEGALITY OF INDEPENDENCE

Thomas H. Naylor & William H. Willimon

The two authors of this challenging piece as prominent activists in the rapidly growing secessionist movement in the USA.

THANKS largely to Abraham Lincoln, *withdrawal from the Union has been viewed as a political pariah by most Americans since the Civil War.*

But although conventional wisdom holds that the 11 Confederate States of America acted illegally when they withdrew from the Union in the 1860s, the Law Professor H. Newcomb Morse argues that the Confederate States did indeed possess the right to leave and that they exercised this right in a proper manner. His arguments confirm our belief that the tenth amendment; the history of nullification; the contingencies under which Virginia, New York and Rhode Island acceded to the Union; and Constitutional amendments proposed while the Confederate States were withdrawing, all support the proposition that it is indeed legal for a state to leave the Union.

Below is a summary of Professor Morse's six arguments.

1. Numerous states throughout the South and the rest of the nation had nullified acts of the central government judged to be unconstitutional long before the people of South Carolina in Convention voted to secede on December 20, 1860. Some of these acts of nullification took

place in Kentucky (1799), Pennsylvania (1809), Georgia (1832), South Carolina (1832), Wisconsin (184), Massachusetts (1855) and Vermont (1858).

According to Professor Morse, 'Nullification occurs when the people of a state refuse to recognise the validity of an exercise of power by the national government which, in the state's view, transcends the limited and enumerated delegated powers of the national constitution.' Those instances where national laws had been nullified by northern states gave credence to the view that the compact forming the Union had already been breached and that the Confederate states were morally and legally free to leave.

2. Most importantly, the US Constitution does not forbid withdrawal from the Union. According to the tenth amendment to the Constitution, 'The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.' Stated alternatively, that which is not expressly prohibited by the Constitution is allowed. The States delegated powers not sovereignty. By international law

sovereignty cannot be surrendered by implication, but only by an express act. Nowhere in the Constitution or in the State ratification documents is there any express renunciation of sovereignty. Because sovereignty remains, all powers delegated can be recalled.

3. While the Confederate States were in the process of taking leave of the Union, three amendments to the Constitution were presented to the US Congress placing conditions on the right of states to leave. Then on March 2, 1861, after seven states had already left the Union, an amendment was proposed which would have outlawed their departure entirely. Although none of these amendments were ever ratified, Professor Morse asked, 'Why would Congress have even considered proposed Constitutional amendments forbidding or restricting the right to withdraw from the Union if any such right was already prohibited, limited or non-existent under the Constitution?'
4. Three of the original 13 states – Virginia, New York & Rhode Island – ratified the US Constitution only conditionally. Each of these states explicitly retained exit rights. By the time South Carolina split in 1860, a total of 33 states had acceded to the Union. By accepting the right of Virginia, New York and Rhode Island to withdraw, had they not tacitly accepted the right of a state to leave the Union?
5. According to Professor Morse, after the Civil War, the Union occupational

armies were removed from Arkansas, North Carolina, Florida, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Virginia only after these former Confederate States had incorporated in their constitutions a clause foregoing the right of sovereignty. Professor Morse also noted that, under this assumption, all of the Northern States and any other state not required to relinquish its sovereignty rights in their constitutions would still have the right to withdraw from the Union at the present.

6. Morse argues that the proper way for a state to leave the Union is through a state convention elected by the people of the state to decide one and only one issue, namely, the right of self-determination. According to Professor Morse, every Confederate State properly utilized the convention process, rather than a legislative means to withdraw. This was as it should have been.

Notwithstanding the conditions imposed on the six former Confederate States requiring them to incorporate clauses in their constitutions forbidding departure from the Union, the ultimate test of sovereignty lies with the people themselves. In practice one real obstacle to departure is that no mechanism exists in our government to deal with this subject. None of our politicians or government officials has considered the logical possibility of dissolution as a strategy for confronting terrorism as well as a plethora of other socioeconomic and political problems related to the size of the United States.

Robert Kennedy had this to say:

'Great cities are too huge to provide the values of community. Community demands a place where people can see and know each other, where children can play and adults work together and join in the pleasures and responsibilities of the place where they live.'

A third strand can be found in the religious life of small town and neighbourhood America familiar to fans of *The Simpsons*. In 1994 Robert Wuthrow of Princeton, the author of *The Restructuring of American Religion* (1988), published a book entitled *How Small Groups Are Changing American Religion*. Wuthrow noted that 40% of Americans belonged to a small group – 800,000 Americans attended Sunday school; 900,000 went to Bible study groups; 500,000 to self-help groups; 250,000 were members of political action groups; 250,000 took part in sports and hobby clubs.

On closer scrutiny Naylor and Willimon discovered that the rapid growth in small groups with less than 20 members was matched by the growth of 'megachurches' with over 200 members. The 'organisational genius' of these megachurches was in 'learning how to cultivate and cluster dozens of small congregations'. While their Sunday worship might be huge, everything else in these churches stayed small as they 'grew groups by the dozens'. At one large church the authors found 28 small groups meeting every week as Alcoholics Anonymous, prayer and bible study groups, or for activities such as pottery classes, divorce recovery, yoga and assertiveness training. These megachurches had capitalised upon 'one of the most astounding small is beautiful phenomena in America' – the small group movement where millions of Americans were fleeing

impersonal large groupings in favour of small, face-to-face groups.

Americans give \$150 billion to charity each year and the annual revenue of non-profit organisations is ten times this figure. But there are subtle shifts taking place. As an example the authors tell a story of how one congregation used to send over \$100,000 a year to denominational headquarters for mission and benevolence work but was no longer sending them a dime, instead sending three times that amount to non-denominational groups such as Habitat for Humanity, Heifer Project International, Promise Keepers, World Vision and other independent mission and benevolence agencies after losing faith in the denomination's ability to administer these programmes.

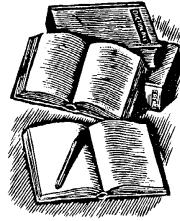
Although the book is about downsizing the USA, the case for dissolution of the union is broached and a significant part of the final chapter, *Empowering the Powerless*, discusses secession, which the authors regard as the logical destination of any process of downsizing or states rights.

'Megastates such as California with a population of 31.4 million, Texas with 18.4 million, and New York with 18.2 million may not only be candidates for secession but downsizing as well,' they argue.

On the hoary question of 'how to get there from here', the authors provide lists of downsizing strategies at the end of each chapter while also addressing specific issues. Discussions of the economics of secession, for instance, tend to focus on the net contributions of the states to the federal budget and normally end up proving secession to be impossible because states cannot afford to pay off their \$100 billion share of the national debt. The authors develop this argument by pointing out that, unlike the

Switzerland solved the problem of minorities by means of creating minority states rather than minority rights.

Leopold Kohr in The Breakdown of Nations



BOOKS

DOWNSIZING THE USA, by Thomas H. Naylor & William H. Willimon. EERDMANS PUBLISHING, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503, 1997, 284 pages; ISBN 0-8028-4330-1.

Reviewed by Peter Etherden

Downsizing the USA begins with a quote from Leopold Kohr's *Breakdown of Nations*: 'There seems only one cause behind all forms of social misery; bigness. It appears to be the one and only problem permeating all creation. Wherever something is wrong. Something is too big.'

Altogether there are 13 references to Kohr's writings, 11 quotes from Frank Bryan, seven apiece from John McClaughry, Václav Havel and Fritz Schumacher and five from Kirkpatrick Sale's *Human Scale*, a book that regrettably disappeared without trace after its publication 25 years ago.

What the authors are proposing is decentralising, downsizing and dissolving virtually every major institution in America. Their thinking is woven from several strands of genuine American homespun.

The first strand is the effect of gigantism as expressed in this quote from Leopold Kohr:

'In our villages, there may be an upsetting murder once in a decade. The rest of the

time we live in unruffled peace. In a large community, on the other hand, there is murder, rape and robbery every hour in some distant corner. But since we are linked with every distant corner, every local incident turns into an issue, a cause, a national calamity clouding our skies not once in a decade but all the time. From our local newspapers we learn that none of the massive misfortunes depressing the world ever happens in our town. Yet we must suffer because our unifiers have forced us to participate in millions of destinies that are not ours. This is the price of modern vast-scale living. Having drawn the entire human race to our anxious bosom, we have to share in all its miseries.'

The second strand has its roots in the boundless nature of the American spirit celebrated by Walt Whitman in *Leaves of Grass* and focused in recent times by the 'lost generation' of Peace Corps pioneers born in the mid-1950s and inspired by Bobby Kennedy in the 1970s to go out into America's inner cities. Shortly before his assassination

FORUM

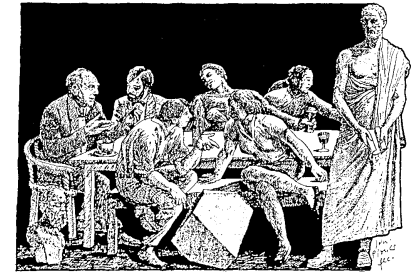
HISTORICAL GAFFES

HAVING enjoyed the company of our Editor and his hot dinners (he is a most excellent cook) for some 40 years, I have to say that his powers as a critic fall sadly short of his convivial and culinary qualities.

I see, to my amazement, that in the last issue (No. 127) I am advertised as 'a fully baptised member of the UK-organised atheist group', to wit the South Place Ethical Society of Conway Hall in Red Lion Square, London. He goes on to make comparably astonishing historical gaffes.

SPES is not an atheistic society, never has been, and I am not atheist. The Society was founded in 1793 as a church or chapel of the new Universalist denomination. Its essential proposition is that since God is love, there has to be ultimate forgiveness. This may seem quaint today, but it was arch heresy in 1793 when hell and damnation were vital to the Church's Christian creed.

In 1802 the Unitarian Church declared that hell did not exist. The Universalists agreed and joined the Unitarians, so losing their separate identity in Britain (it has been retained in the US and Canada to this day).



In the 1830s the Society abandoned Communion. The pewter chalice and plate survive to the present day, with the massive *South Place Bible*. In the 1860s, led by a new American minister, Moncure Conway, the Society abandoned heaven as well as hell, but not Christian ethics or religious forms. Sunday Meetings took the place of Sunday worship. The hymn book was rewritten to omit the name of God and JC. Baptism, weddings and funerals continued as before. In the 1880s the name was changed to the present one and the Trust deeds defined the Society's creed as that of a 'rational religious sentiment'. So it remains to the present day.

Just one final remark. John's extraordinary write-off of Conway Hall is amazingly superficial. No claim is made for its external architecture. It is neither good nor bad, just ordinary. What is important is what is inside and what goes on there. Conway Hall is London's Temple of Dissent. Its 12 rooms are all available for hire. They accommodate meetings of between a dozen and 500 people. No building is as important to radical London. Freedom of speech and assembly are meaningless without some-

where to meet – and Conway Hall has provided that since the Society built it in 1929.

I am personally committed to a rational religious sentiment as at South Place and in the work and examples of William Blake, William Morris and D.H. Lawrence.

Peter Cadogan

3 Hinchinbrooke House, Greville Road, London

WAL-MART GIANT

THE problem of excessive scale applies as much to the small private company as to the mega-corporation. No organisation or organism that exceeds its optimum scale can live healthily. The multiple problems faced by retail chain Wal-Mart, the world's biggest private employer, is not the least bit surprising. Wal-Mart has been accused in various quarters of worker abuse, from using minors and not paying overtime, to discriminating against women staff, neglecting medical treatment and hiring illegal foreign workers.

Wal-Mart stores hire more than a million workers, with plans to hire more as the giant expands further. By November last year there were nearly 40 lawsuits against alleged malpractices by the company, and the number of complaints and legal actions has grown. When something has ballooned well beyond the human scale, people-related problems come to the fore.

Have the lessons been learnt? That would presume some acknowledgement that there are lessons in the first place. Two years ago Wal-Mart refused to participate in an independent monitoring system to ensure that foreign-made goods sold in the US were manufactured under humane conditions. Since setting up operations in low-cost China, it has met widespread complaints among Chinese workers of banning worker

unionisation. In January this year Wal-Mart Stores disavowed an internal audit of labour law compliance relating to violations in the US involving minors and employees working through breaks and meal times. In June, internal company reports told of how the company was not up to par with others in promoting women, while it was also revealed that Wal-Mart had benefited from a billion dollars in government subsidies.

It would seem that the bigger the company the higher the stakes, and the greater the temptation to violate humane limitations to profiteering. And when violations do occur, they also seem to be comparable in scale to the size of the corporation. There is at least one prosecutor in the US who believes that he was relieved of his duties by the government after taking up a case against the company.

Would it not be better if governments set more regulations that are enforced more diligently on large businesses? By the same token, local communities should be much more empowered to ensure that governments do what they must in the way they should. But that would presume that people should come before objects, products, profits and share values.

Bunn Ngara

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Sabah, Malaysia*

RESISTANCE

YOUR readers must be among the first to realise that they have, so to speak, a teardance-on-the-Titanic lifestyle, generously hosted by a global monetocracy, whose power is based on creating debt-money. At this rate, banks will end up with as much prestige as tobacco companies. Meanwhile,

advancing technology and expertise inevitably concentrate power more and more, because only the wealthy can afford their goods and services. Price of a new microchipped key for my 1996 Skoda car (a company now owned by VW): £50.

You'll only get a return to local power if life becomes simpler again. In my childhood, home, work, school and entertainment all had to be near bus routes or railway lines. When cars and lorries took over in the 1950s, our fate was sealed.

Yet patchy resistance continues. Our mutual friend, Edward Echlin, the John Seymour of Bexhill, carries on growing a range of fruit and veg that would do credit to the high Middle Ages. Who else today seriously tries to cultivate the medlar?

Allan Bula

65 Wickham Ave., Bexhill-On-Sea East Sussex

OUR MORAL MORES

THE good news is that your 'A New Start' (FWR 127) gets it 98% right. You have avoided what was beginning to become an ongoing editorial rant and instead provided a taut, excellently crafted expression of your view. Great!

The bad news is that the 2% wrong still invalidates your conclusion – that smallness in everything is our only hope. So, where did you go wrong? You misunderstand Adam Smith, but we'll let it pass. The serious bit is your conviction that our societal remedy can come only from a moral change in humankind. This is nonsense. Or, to put it more accurately, if this be literally true, then there is no hope for humanity.

The reason is simple. What Kirkpatrick Sale describes as 'the two-million-year-old primal self' within each one of us is the obvious and 99% determinant of our moral

mores. The societal effects that concern you have impacted significantly only since the industrial revolution – over a mere 300 years. Arguably and primarily, only since World War Two. So the change in our primal moral mores as resulting from the emergence of civilization can only be negligible.

Alan Ecob

*2 The Bastion, Castlecrag, NSW 2068,
Australia*

EXPLANATION?

I DON'T know where you are getting your ideas from nowadays. You seem to have adopted a wholly deterministic view of human beings, which amounts to a position of total despair. No one is responsible for their actions, Bush, Blair and Ian Huntley are simply playing out the way they have been conditioned. I wonder how such a defence would stand up in court?

This is all the more remarkable as you at the same time profess your adherence to Christianity. Nowhere in the Bible does Christ appear to be saying that people can't avoid being wicked. I too take the view of total despair and think that we shall destroy our environment and ourselves – not because we have no option but because of our greed and our wickedness.

If your thesis is correct, how do you explain that this degeneracy is not universal and that a minority seems to be resistant?

Howard Cheney

*Aylesmore Farm, Shipton-On-Stour,
Warwickshire*

As usual Howard is a victim of his own capacity for sweeping generalisation. Of course free will is an integral factor of human identity, but Howard ignores that some people have lots and lots of power to impose their views and their values on the rest of us.

– Editor

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The general human scene is one of increasing turmoil, confusion and danger. *Fourth World Review* seems to be the only publication in the world which is seeking to grapple with the essential questions of overall human control as the means of countering the crisis. But after nearly 40 years of effort we remain a tiny voice in the prevailing cacophony; albeit starting from scratch we now circulate to a fringe of concerned people in about 35 countries and always the question is, what more can we do?



The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) in Denmark is doing invaluable work, as did the Schumacher Society in the USA with its comprehensive conference on Money Problems, and there are many organisations and publications such as Intermediate Technology, The Soil Association, Fair Trade, Energy 21 and others, such as movements for ecological sanity, for peace, for human rights, for organic agriculture, energy conservation, monetary justice, fair trade, gender respect, ethnic recognition and so on, all seeking to come to grips with particular consequences of the lack of democratic control in human affairs generally. But how do we proceed to advance the basic case for this control in order to avert the need for much of this work?

What is at stake here is need for a major exercise of coordination. The world is in the grip of an enormous ferment of protest and of questioning of fundamental aspects of governing structures; there is an urgent need to demonstrate how the many consequential causes the prevailing abuse of power is promoting are related to the general lack of democratic control and how that control needs to be established if all these efforts are to succeed. To take but one example, Intermediate Technology is simply an alternative form of technology if it is unrelated to the quest to achieve democracy.

Our own publication is continuously strapped for the means to keep afloat at all; money is a constant spanner in the works and recently we had to circulate a large number of readers whose contributions were overdue. The result was encouraging and our grateful thanks to all who have responded so that our immediate future is assured. But a hand-to-mouth existence is a precarious base when we need to be reaching out to an ever widening circle of concerned people and generating the kind of activity that leads to results.

I am only too well aware of the shortcomings of our *Review*, but to overcome them we need more action and involvement from our readers; so this is an appeal. Please help.

JOHN PAPWORTH

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