

Fourth World News



THE UK government has warned that children should go easy on using mobile phones whilst doubts about health hazards remain unresolved. • The blackout on Iraq by the BBC and other media continues despite the increase in deaths from suicide bombings and the general way in which the country is falling apart. In this respect the Tsunami disaster has been a free gift for Tony Blair in shifting focus from his Iraq catastrophe. • A teenage Muslim girl has been shot by her brother in Turkey for wearing trousers at a wedding. • The British Government is sending a further 400 troops to increase security in Iraq. 790 police recruits have been killed since Iraq's liberation. • There have been the worst floods in Carlisle for 150 years. • The MRSA superbug is killing 10,000 people a year. • Deadly micro organism material from Mars is suspected of infecting humans with hitherto unknown diseases. • 40% of Iraq police are refusing to turn up for duty because of fears for their own safety. • 2,000 or more people have been killed in the Philippines from typhoon storm flooding caused by strip logging on mountain sides. • A pub chain is installing calculators for younger darts players because play was being slowed down by slow maths. • A 'scramjet' flew above the Pacific 10 times faster than sound. If and when commercially developed, New Yorkers will reach London in two hours. • Iran is producing nuclear weapons at a secret site. So is Britain, Russia, China, USA, France and others. Russia's President Putin says they are developing a new type of nuclear weapon other countries do not have. • The Federation of Sub-Postmasters has warned that the UK postal service is in danger of extinction. It lost 40% of its business when the govern-

ment decided to pay pensions directly into bank accounts. • A giant shopping centre in Portsmouth, voted as Britain's ugliest building, has been blown up by demolition experts. • The Americans have announced there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and have demobilised their search team. Whoever said there were? And why? • Almost half the people in employment lie awake at night worrying about their jobs and homes, according to a survey by University of Liverpool. • Organic tomato ketchup contains three times the level of cancer-resisting compounds as the chemical rubbish, according to The New Scientist. • 'It was tribalism that finished Rome, it will finish Brussels too.' Title of article in weekly magazine The Spectator. • Catholic Bishops in Spain have been trying to defy the Vatican in endorsing condom use to prevent AIDS. • Government ministers should not have the power to appoint the heads of powerful quangos, says Whitehall's standards watchdog. • The obesity epidemic is out of control, according to a 'EUrope' spokesman. He should know. • Gordon Brown, UK's finance minister, is doing the Princess Diana Africa circuit to mark 'The Year of Africa'. Any image improvement in his struggle with Tony Blair is purely coincidental. • The UK Tories are promising, with an election in view, to cut taxes. Whoever would have thought it? • Despite the Tsunami earthquake the Indonesian army is using the prevailing chaos to attack separatist freedom fighters – The Free Church Movement. • Salmonella was found in cooked meats supplied to three supermarkets in routine tests by the Food Standards Agency. – S.H.

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



No. 131
2005

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Kirkpatrick Sale
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HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES
Quantity versus Quality

Editorials:
REASSESSMENT
AUSCHWITZ

FOURTH WORLD REVIEW No. 131

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INVOICE



It is not easy to act responsibly if one lacks responsibility. It is fundamental to our approach that power to decide must stem from the individual. That is why our cover price is notional and why our readers are free to set their own subscription rates. It is also why we discourage advertising as being an intrusion into our individual powers of judgement. So the responsibility here is on each reader, on whom we rely heavily just to keep going.

Remember our mantra:

*The one to act is me,
The place to act is here,
And the time to act is now.*

And then perhaps add a mite more.

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Bush. What purpose is served by this calculated misinterpretation? I suppose they pay this producer chap quite a packet. Why don't they give me the job? I would do it as a gift and I would focus on the language and make all other aspects of the play subservient to it. But I always was a rather opinionated bastard.

A return from Stratford involved a change of trains, and in Birmingham a change of stations requiring a 10-minute walk through the heart of the city. It was a frenzy of glass, glitter and gaudy lighting. Shiny surfaced structures soar above as one walks between them in an area called 'The Bullring' and one's senses are dazzled and bemused by the sheer confused excess of size, shape, light, texture and the constant rush of the non-stop traffic of strangers passing other strangers.

Birmingham is no different in these regards from many other urban centres

which were once called cities, except that its modernisation is more strident and emphatic. But two things constantly arrest my attention: just how recent and speedy has been this modernising transformation, and how transient it is likely to prove. It is not difficult to imagine how these vast glass towers will one day be the habitat of nature's rats rather than commercial and political ones. What surfaces rapidly in history is apt to submerge at much the same speed. Arriving back in Swindon, where there is no bus service at a late hour, I took a taxi. The driver had a chemicalised card hanging from his rear view mirror. From the open doorway I explained that they caused me headache, depression and nausea and I could not travel with him. He was outraged; nobody else had ever complained; it made the cab smell sweet, it was an air freshener! So I left him with his air poisoner and took another. ■

The impact of advanced technology has been to erase the metaphysical truths embedded in the forms of living handed down by our remote ancestors. And without metaphysics, man cannot live – that is to say, without some true impressions of his metaphysical nature, man cannot be moral or happy. We are transient beings, yet the desires and impulses of our transitory personalities can never be the factor that guides us to fulfilment. Our personalities are temporary structures erected like scaffolding around some as yet unfinished temple of imperishable being, a temple called, in the ancient teachings, the soul. In illness, man can let go of the scaffolding a little, but this little is a great deal. He can at least see the scaffolding for what it is.

Jacob Needleman

REASSESSMENT

WE ARE CURRENTLY in the path of five horsemen of the apocalypse riding down on us in a fury of destructive impetuosity:

1. ENVIRONMENTAL DISINTEGRATION:

A factor often encapsulated in the phrase 'global warming'. It is a factor indicating that everywhere the icecaps are dissolving, that ocean levels are rising, that marine life is already poisoned, that breeding patterns are being disrupted and that the fertility of all life forms is increasingly and adversely affected. Despite Kyoto no serious cessation of the industrial emissions is in sight, forest destruction continues unabated, as does the poisoning of land and water with chemical farming.

2. WAR:

Nearly 30 countries now possess nuclear capability and their number is growing. The international arms trade in non-governmental hands flourishes as never before, accelerating numerous prevailing tensions and making future major military conflict inevitable. 'A nation armed and prepared for war can no more help going to war than a chicken can help laying an egg.' – George Bernard Shaw.

3. HUMAN NUMBERS:

The population of China today is greater

than the global population 50 years ago and similar increases are evident in many countries. These swollen numbers appear set to increase very much more despite the natural checks on numbers of war, disease, famine and homosexuality.

4. RESOURCES:

All current theories appear to assume an unlimited capacity for economic expansion in defiance of the finite nature of our planet and its resources. The industrial systems developed over the last two centuries need oil to breathe at all and they have used it with a degree of reckless prodigality which is already beginning to indicate the limits of its availability. Farming systems have also been industrialised with the same abandon, despite the extent to which they have also become dependant on a vast increase of use of another finite source, water, for which a modern urban lifestyle is making similar excessive demands. Domestic appliances, motoring, air travel and other factors need ever increasing availability; all these trends have already created shortages, leading in turn to conflict situations, in China, India, Pakistan, the Middle East and elsewhere.

5. GLOBALISATION:

The ability to produce an economic surplus in one region in order to trade it with

another has enriched human life down the centuries and until the advent of mechanisation and of multinational banking systems the fruits of such enterprise were mainly enjoyed by local producers. The modern era has seen a process of consolidation of trading power in remote hands, of mergers, takeovers, combinations and bankruptcies, which has resulted in giant empires of economic power at the expense of local control and enrichment. The glories of the splendid cities of the past, of Venice, Oxford, Dresden, Avignon, Salamanca and a host of others, have given way to vast urban conglomerations which are as unsustainable as they are ugly and demeaning of human stature, and which are only too likely to disappear as rapidly as they have arisen.

Sixth rider

These and other factors have produced what might well be termed a sixth horseman of the apocalypse, one which seems not to feature in the literature and which may well prove as destructive as all the others combined. The well-being of any human society is dependant on a pronounced degree of personal cohesion of its members; on a given level of common objectives and understandings, based in turn on a body of moral principle and practice, principles which embody their cultural and ethical heritage, based in turn on personal relationships.

A combination of economic and political centralisation, the resulting dominance of commercial interests over all others aided by the phenomenal powers of modern mass communication, has resulted in this sixth rider, the disintegration of local community relationships, of community cohesion, and of local power.

It would perhaps be uncharitable to detail the attempts being made by numerous radical and reformist movements in so many countries to counter the crisis confronting us; whatever degree of attention they achieve they are all marked with a general failure to have any significant effect, if only because they fail to grasp the real nature of the problem. So let it just be said that that problem is not primarily one of war, inorganic farming, technology – intermediate or otherwise – or of world poverty, of inadequate attention given to spiritual matters (however conceived) or any other of the concerns that engage so many of them.

The core problem is that of power and relationships. The crisis factors that overshadow the human outlook are a direct result of the growth of new concentrations of power which are beyond the democratic control of any of us. The new forms of power such as TV and radio, or the old forms in giant new structures, such as banking and insurance, or advertising, or shopping malls, are not subject to any form of democratic control; collectively they espouse values and condition mass responses which simply trap the masses into giving passive assent to their operations.

Disempowerment

There is a deep-rooted failure here to grasp the extent to which the destruction of localised community power and the emergence of a mass scale of living makes the individual member of the mass the victim of the methods of mass manipulation which centralised power structures deploy; a readiness to assume that seeking to achieve remedial results within the prevailing mass power structures when the very nature of

golden opinions from all sorts of people. I must say when I survey the general spirit of youngsters today I don't think I would feel disposed to embark again on any such venture. Never mind, but when I saw the play advertised I decided to make my first visit to the Bard's birthplace. The train service was so complex and the coach service non-existent so I decided to hitch-hike. After all in the seventies I had hitched twice across the United States and in the sixties I had hitched from Addis Ababa via Nairobi and Tanzania down to Lusaka in Zambia, so why not?

Well, a friend kindly drove me to a road junction; it was cold, wet and windy. Amazingly in minutes a car drew up and invited me aboard. A young man, recently married who traded in antique furniture, friendly, relaxed and easy company. He dropped me at a busy junction just on the edge of Stow-on-the-Wold. I never visit our old Cotswold towns without offering up a prayer of gratitude for the good fortune of being born English and able to enjoy some of the most exquisite civic centres that the wit of man has ever been inspired to create, nor without calling down the most lurid imprecations on the heads of the greedy, insensitive swine who do so much to ruin them. I stood in the rain holding a large card showing my destination and energetically waving my thumb towards the direction. There was a lot of traffic and I started to count, noticing with some surprise how frequently there were horse boxes. But this of course was the last day on which hunting was legally legal. I counted well over 200 vehicles and my watch indicated time was running out. More than time, I had become terribly cold, even though for this occasion I was wearing a waistcoat, so I walked back

to the centre of this superbly lovely town and ordered a taxi for a ruinous price, meanwhile trying to warm myself with a cup of anaemic lukewarm coffee in a local hostelry for which I paid £1.50. We English may be the world's masters at building towns but we seem to have no idea how to make a decent cup of coffee.

Incidentally, I find this attempt to ban hunting, (I say 'attempt' because no sane Englishman will take the least notice of one of the most ominous and disquieting abuses of our legal process ever to have surfaced in the modern era) one which will only have the effect of bringing it into even great contempt and to register my conviction as a normally law-abiding citizen that this particular law is quite impossible to enforce and that it will inevitably fall into well-deserved desuetude as a matter of course.

What about the play? Julius Caesar is an account of the factional rivalry of groups in the highly hierarchical society that dominated Rome two thousand years ago. For some reason the producer had the players in this historical drama, surely one of the Bard's greatest achievements, in modern dress! Brutus, 'the noblest Roman of them all', was in a nondescript black suit with cheap yellow plastic shoes; the rest of the cast were similarly insignificantly and distractingly arrayed. I am not suggesting for a moment that, despite his deserts, the producer should be hung, drawn and quartered, however insistently the thought may intrude, if only for his failure to grasp that the problems of the play focus not on costume but the manner of verbal delivery and personality projection. Despite its time setting of imperial Rome he seemed to give it the setting of a teenage binge-drinking, post-clubbing punch-up in Shepherd's

tions. The driver on my return journey, middle-aged, loquacious, opinionated, vehement and, for all practical purposes involving an exchange of views, stone deaf, was quite sure all this gloom and doom stuff was being put about by communists, weirdos, Asians and anti-Europeans. If there were any problems with the way the planet was going science would soon find a way of getting us all onto another, just like people landed in America years ago; nobody thought then that if Europe didn't suit people they could find another continent did they? I rather furtively gave a glance at the man's face; it was alight with passion, fervour and conviction. It occurred to me that what was singular about his views is that most of us live the sort of lifestyle which might induce any celestial observer to assume we share some at least of them, perhaps those relating to interplanetary mobility.

I HAD BEEN INVITED to join a friend for a dinner at the Savage Club. The members address each other as 'Brother Savage', a mode which evokes its own train of thought, but the atmospheres is very much like an old boys' reunion of a public school, albeit none of the members seem to be under 40. My host was a stockbroker and his brother plays the French horn in one of the great orchestras which so enrich London life. I think I rather bored the toenails off the company with a rendering of some passages from Julius Caesar. Later, en route for bed, a change of trains led to an hour's wait at Earl's Court, so I arrived in Richmond after one in the morning. Fortunately Teddy Goldsmith heard me fumbling for the key and admitted me in his pyjamas. In the kitchen he declared he

was hungry and proceeded to consume a bowl of, wait for it, this leading guru of the ecology movement, cornflakes! Of course they were organic, free range, and could doubtless boast several other virtues, but cornflakes! In the morning over a late breakfast, wholemeal toast and coffee, he regaled me with the global outlook! Ocean levels were due to rise 60ft deluging most of the food growing areas and causing global starvation. But global warming is a tricky business and is likely to be accompanied by a new ice-age which would cause a general freeze up over much of Britain. Well, I can't claim I haven't been warned. Back at the farmhouse I was greeted in no uncertain terms by my two ravenous pets. They were not worrying about global warming, they wanted food – even if it was some tinned garbage which is surely doctored with some substance which impels them to devour it as though the end of the world is indeed nigh.

SOON AFTER I WAS DEMOBBED from the RAF where, as a cook, I can claim I had won the war, (my cooking was so awful they got on with the war to get rid of me), I was admitted to the London School of Economics. One of my lecturers was Harold Laski, whose weekly off-the-cuff lectures to a hundred or so of us were as hilarious as they were brilliant – to use a much overworked adjective, Another staff luminary was R.H. Tawney, whose *Religion and The Rise of Capitalism* remains a vital textbook for any understanding of the modern world.

For some months I stayed in an Anglo Catholic youth hostel in Chiswick where I persuaded the warden to let me stage Julius Caesar with the lads. I was amazed how well they took to it and the production won

the structure on a mass basis disempowers the mass as a matter of course, and a failure to grasp that no solution within such a power structure is remotely possible.

The dynamic of democracy involves citizen participation, what else indeed? An element eliminated by the nature of the mass structure itself, a structure which makes the mass the victims rather than the masters of the centralised power freaks.

How then can we cease to be their victims and at last become masters of our own collective destiny? What is involved here is not simply the triumph of good intentions, but the paramount thrust of clear thinking which will make such intentions effective. But where is this thinking? Where are the debates and forums concerned with the abolition of mass structures and the creation of empowered communities? New forces which are confronting the problems of creating citizen empowerment and the disempowerment of these centralised manipulative forces, political financial and industrial, which are destroying the world?

Where is the scholarship, the research and the vision to create the tools for this change? This is surely the challenge to every reader of these words, that scholarship, that questing for truth and betterment can only be local. To look elsewhere but in ourselves and our own locale is to perpetuate the mass nature of the powerlessness which currently imprisons us.

There is a worldwide dawning realisation of this need for a new conceptual framework, one which ceases to focus on

centralised hierarchies and the monstrous perils they are breeding and which, whilst targeting the locale of every concerned innovator, relates not upwards to centralised power structures, but horizontally to other concerned local groupings.

The modern crisis is a crisis of power, of power beyond citizen control because it can be too large even for topside leaders to control. It will destroy us if we do not create an alternative structure, one which, because it is small and local, is fully subject to citizen control.

These are not matters the concern of any particular nation, tribe or continent; they confront the human race in its entirety with a challenge the like of which no other generation across the entire span of history has ever had to face. How to transform the economic and political forces now making our planet uninhabitable by their insatiable greed, into democratic entities genuinely responsive to ordinary citizen moral judgement?

The degrees of political illiteracy which assume the vast powers of television, radio and printing, the powers of the world of money, armament marketing, oil and industry, can be controlled through the bottleneck of the mass themselves, are surely now manifest. In radical terms nothing today is more important than this struggle to diffuse power, to localise it, to create a global organic structure of small-scale empowered communities where if power is abused, its effects will be limited to its own reach, and where the creative power of human nobility can be free at last to find scope for fulfilment. ■

The more the state is enlarged the more freedom is diminished.

Rousseau

AUSCHWITZ

WHY DID IT HAPPEN? *A deliberately planned death camp where over a million were murdered? How did it happen? And how could it have been prevented? Today the same questions continue to haunt us. The answers given are invariably inadequate when they are simply inaccurate, for they seldom focus on what really triggered the whole disaster.*

The Nazi movement was evil, but it is important to see that most Nazi supporters were perfectly ordinary decent people. Many of them had endured years of unemployment and the blunt, cruel edge of the sword of poverty; suddenly a leader appeared fired with the conviction that he knew the cause of their suffering and that he knew how to cure it. Despite his bleak moral and intellectual limitations he had an unusual gift of utterance; he created a movement, a following, and before long he was able to recruit gangs of uniformed thugs to terrorise on the streets any who might seek to oppose him.

Brigandage

His message was crude and, despite its superficiality, it was, to many, compelling. It was all the fault of one racial minority, he would destroy it and give Germany prosperity and a new greatness. He would create jobs, build a huge network of autobahn, to say nothing of launching a 'people's' car – the Volkswagen. Germany would no longer be a victim of a Jewish inspired military defeat, it would be strong again and ultimately victorious. It was a heady message and millions swallowed it; so he was voted into power and enabled to launch his

evil career of militaristic adventurism.

It is doubtful if the average German citizen voter had the remotest idea of the tidal wave of evil his vote was helping to launch upon the world; his concern was with providing for his family and recovering his poverty-stricken self-respect by getting a job and a decent wage. Yet unwittingly he was helping to create not only Auschwitz but other death camps, as well as the multi-million deaths of Russian and German soldiers on the Russian war front, the colossal waste of life and material in the desert warfare in North Africa and the victimhood of mass bombings of German and English cities, to which must be added not only the enormous numbers of sailors and airmen who died in half a decade of destruction but countless other victims in Poland, the Balkans and elsewhere.

There were two factors at work here which continue to be totally ignored and which in consequence help to blind us to the real causes of Auschwitz. The first relates to economic morality. No civilisation can flourish without a moral basis to its economic activity, yet despite the extent to which economic activity has come to dominate modern life it is still without any moral basis at all. It is simply brigandage and greed on the rampage. It would be bad enough if economic activity were an isolated factor, but it is one which touches the core of moral conduct and which has come to wield such enormous power as to be the determining factor of nearly all other state power considerations. If the basis of a modern state has no moral purpose or foundation it inevitably lacks any immune system which will constrain the abuses of its own

have which draw them hither). The result can scarcely fail to be massive job losses, mass starvation and bitter civil war (perhaps on the lines of John Seymour's engrossing futurist novel *Retrieved From The Future*), or some draconian totalitarian government which will make it a priority to silence any shadow of dissent such as my own as a matter of course. I find myself wondering where on earth is the quality of leadership in our affairs? Any one of my quartet of guests is fully capable of holding down a cabinet post in the government, but why do they not see the immediate need for a local emergency group to cope with what is looming up? Why, for that matter, are there no similar moves up and down the country? We seem to be afflicted by a kind of intellectual and moral paralysis which makes us incapable of measuring present trends and present resources against any likely result if these trends are not soon checked.

I WAS IN THE VESTRY preparing for a service and glanced at the page detailing the 'readings'. There was a passage from John's Gospel and my eye alighted on a familiar sentence: 'In my Father's house there are many mansions...'. But that is not what I read; it said instead, 'In my father's house there are many rooms...' and I gave an involuntary gasp. The Anglican Church seems to be afflicted with a chronic fit of the liturgical fidgets; it simply cannot leave well alone. It has been blessed with a liturgical inheritance of quite matchless grandeur and yet, in a quest perhaps for 'relevance', perhaps for political correctness, perhaps from a desire to appear 'cool' and to attract more young people, it persists in fatuous attempts to what it ought to be

safeguarding as something vital to its very existence. The change of that single word 'mansions' to 'rooms' may be a minor example of the fatuousness of its endeavours, but who did it? Why did they do it? And what was achieved? The phrase has its own rhythm and the alliteration helps to lodge it effortlessly in the mind. The alteration not only destroys both but reduces its meaning to a banality, which incidentally robs it of its real significance. Taken in toto the meaning of 'Father's house' quite easily enables the hearer to grasp that it is a poetic expression of God's universe, within which the accommodation of 'many mansions' is seen as fully in keeping with its transcendent spaciousness. The early translators did a fine job in rendering the passage as they did; they trusted us to grasp as a matter of course that the world of the spirit needs particular language forms to convey understanding of transcendent verities. Our modern translators repose in us no such trust and their substitutions have the effect of making Jesus appear to be wallowing in the prose of an estate agent's handout.

A VISIT TO LONDON involved a cab ride from my village to Swindon Station. The driver, a blonde woman, seemed far from happy and it transpired her twin cousins were both afflicted with testicular cancer. At 17 it is tough luck on the lads and after each having had one removed the disease has now spread to the lungs. Teddy Goldsmith told me later that testicular cancer in young men has increased 300 fold. Odd to think hospitals and schools continue to allow cola vending machines and the sale of highly chemically flavoured potato crisps on their premises, presumably supposing cancer is a result of unfortunate planetary conjunc-

FOURTH WORLD SPECTATOR

THREE DAYS before the sailing date they said there would be a two-day delay, which made arriving on time for the Vermont Radcon event problematical.

Then they said a week's delay, which meant cancellation if I was not to arrive after the meeting. Very disappointing, but at least they refunded my passage money as wiseacre friends assured me it was always a risk when getting a berth on a cargo ship and why not save all the trouble and go by air anyway? Well perhaps I will if ever I am convinced I really must, bearing in mind the only thing I really must ever do is die, and everything to do with air travel seems to me a very transient invention of the devil. But there is sugar in the pill of all this, for when later I was asked to sign a friend's passport application I found I had to quote the number of my own, and when I checked I discovered that it was several months out of date; meaning if I had gone to the port, (sea or air), they would not have allowed me to board! And no refund either!

I had some friends to dinner one evening, two married couples, one both priests (she the Vicar), the other a high pitch consultant who is constantly flying to dif-

ferent parts of the globe to advise on species preservation, and whose wife is a headmistress. No, that last word is politically incorrect, she is a head teacher; no doubt I suppose, because headmistress may suggest the senior rank of an altogether different institution. When the talk got around to 'EUrope' and our prospects I found myself listening glumly to an exchange based on assumptions which struck me as about as remote from reality as a mirage. But they are assumptions which underlie nearly all serious contemporary journalism. A Times headline recently warned that government measures to counter global warming would make British industry 'uncompetitive'. No journalist was trundled off to some mental asylum for projecting such rubbish, and nobody bats an eyelid when the Chancellor of the Exchequer assures the country that his budgets are designed to promote ever more growth. Globalisation is a bubble which will before long burst, whether or not it is accompanied by sky-high oil prices, another world war, or the unstoppable mass migration of people in poor countries to rich countries (and which will of course swamp whatever social security systems we



power. On this basis Nazism had no need to worry about the moral basis of its economic activity, if only because everyone else was ignoring it too. Nazism flourished in a morass of capitalist moral indifference to the problems of human motivation.

The second factor relates to the tragic misconceptions about the nature of democracy and its dangers when operating on a mass scale. The qualification is all important. The Greek city states, often regarded as the originators of democracy, even with their considerable non-voting slaves, were minute compared with today's mass multi-million aggregates. We are slow today to appreciate that on such a vast scale democracy, the presumed voice of the people governing affairs, is quite impossible. Quite simply, a mass democracy is an oxymoron. Why? Because, to quote a general law, the larger the unit the smaller the significance of the individual, just as the smaller the unit the larger the significance of each member. But if increased size decreases the individual's significance and his effective power, what then happens to the much greater power the much greater size of the unit encompasses? It becomes embodied in the central and centralised controlling institutions.

Bogus Ballots

It is there that effective decision-making power is deployed, and since modern instruments of mass persuasion and conditioning, of TV, radio and the tabloids, are now so powerful the voice of the individual is effectively negated. This is not simply a matter of being ignored, the forces at work are also powerful and sophisticated enough to condition and manipulate the mass individual response and to promote acceptance

of the values related simply to the business of profit or power questing.

We need to see that the mere factor of increased size disempowers the individual. This is why the frenetic bouts of occasional electoral campaigning on a mass scale to determine who shall run the show are essentially bogus. The citizen has already been manipulated into an acceptance of those values underpinning the industrial processes which are quite literally destroying the basis of civilised, and even biological, existence, and into an acceptance of giant political arrangements which, because of their size and their power to determine policies, to determine such key matters as mass conference arrangements and agenda, are effectively beyond the power of the citizen to influence or control. This is why all mass political parties and governments, whatever labels they carry, are right-wing and geared to authoritarianism. It is why all mass societies are dangerous and why they are all on an unavoidable disaster path. They are dangerous because the scale on which they operate renders them beyond the control of citizen moral judgement.

There have of course been giant empires all through history which have achieved centuries of continuity, but they never pretended to be remotely democratic and nor were they armed with the immense powers of technological destruction and mass manipulation at large today. World War I, with its millions of innocent casualties, was the clearest possible warning that with such powers, wielded on such a scale, governments were incapable of staying on course; they were out of control, running amok and, by their very existence, capable of launching excesses which, if not soon checked, would render our planet uninhab-

itable and any prospect of civilisation not remotely attainable.

Any mass of people will include a minority seeking to influence the general course into beneficial channels, and also of a much greater number which will have no such interest. If another minority is concerned to quest for self-enrichment or self-empowerment, and then assumes mastery of the centralised controlling organs, in so doing they become simply part of the disease of a sick civilisation rather than of its cure. By contrast that modest minority concerned with human betterment is simply swamped numerically by the mass. That mass can be inspired or stampeded into almost any course that suits the book of the dominant forces, which of course thrive on the disempowerment of individuals in any mass society. It may help to promote those forces plunging into excess, as it did in the thirties in Germany, and as it is doing now in Britain and the USA to acquiesce in the Iraq war, or into accepting mass motoring as a sensible and sustainable means of transport, the building of vast motorways, nuclear bombs (or energy), shopping malls, supermarkets, 400-page newspapers and similar morbidly sterile excesses. If Auschwitz was one such excess it was part of a larger one of Nazi rule, and that in turn was but part of an even larger phenomena of mass entities and mass disempowerment on the giant scale we have come to accept, by a remarkable inversion of language, as being democratic.

Wherever giant mass government exists that power of government is abused and nothing those powerless masses can do, however often they dutifully, and even zealously, troop into mass polling booths, can stop it. Nobody voted for World War I;

it happened despite people's wishes because they had no power to stop it. Hitler demonstrated just how easily the enormous machinery of 'mass democracy' could be used to exploit prevailing discontents and enable a gang of social misfits and personal failures to clamber into the pinnacles of power and to besmirch every moral aspiration to which people down the ages had ever aspired. The record today of Blair and Bush reflects merely a difference of degree rather than of principle.

On a mass scale moral distinctions inevitably become blurred; what are the temptations and conveniences of owning a private automobile when contrasted with the appalling dangers of global warming? Or the prospect of a decent job compared with defaming the Jews? On such a scale even the voice of the Church is silenced or cowed into inaudibility, and the mass-conditioned individual is encouraged to ignore any possible consequences, however evil or dangerous, as he succumbs to the market contrived bait of living the life of Riley.


Auschwitz was but one of the sores on the mortally sick body of western civilisation. All we who are members share responsibility and guilt for it so long as we continue to acquiesce in the values promoted by the powerful forces using the scale that perpetrated it.

It may be argued that even small, empowered communities, which may answer the current crisis of power, can be prone to the excesses of giant structures; they may wish to persecute racial minorities in their midst, bring back public executions for thieves, or sex offenders, restore flogging or similar depravities.

However true this may be, the small unit will have one active element which the

Foundation for Humanity's Adulthood. 'What is being presented,' he says 'is the very opposite of faith and belief; it is rational explanation. It actually brings such fundamental freedom to the human situation that it takes humans beyond the state where they need dogmatic forms of reinforcement and religious faith.' No lack of confidence there. Let readers who wish read on.


BEYOND OIL, published collectively by Rising Tide, an Oxford activist group 'supporting the grassroots movement against climate change'; 2004.

 Reviewed by John Papworth

IT'S all here, details of 'The Oil Curse and Solutions for an oil-free future', so we do away with cars and other forms of oil dependency and go for home-grown organic veg, bicycles, wind power and solar panels. Fine, who in his right mind would want to disagree? The trouble is that Intermediate Technology and journals such as *The Ecologist* have been spelling this out for a generation or more, meanwhile the general situation has gone, and continues to go, from bad to very much worse, and that 'grassroots movement against climate change' (assuming they are referring really to climate disruption), well, where is it? Part of the 60 million vote that went to elect George Bush? Part of the two million who demonstrated so ineffectively against the onset of the Iraq War? One asks only to stress the obvious, that despite the dangers developing in almost every aspect of human affairs those who seek to check those dangers have yet to develop any coherent political and economic strategy to

do so. Their thinking continues to be embedded in pre-Khor, pre-Schumacher parameters, thinking that ignores the factor of scale, thinking that still assumes some radical mass campaign will answer the need; not a glimmer of awareness that no such campaign will arise, or that it will not work if it did; thinking that ignores that the key elements of modern societies are running amok because the scale on which they are operating makes it impossible for anyone, whether it is Bush, Blair or our Oxford Rising Tide hopefuls or, for that matter, Fourth World Review, to do anything about it at all unless the scale is reduced to humanly manageable proportions. Shall we get together boys, whilst there is time, to work out a decentralist, people-empowering programme that might just possibly work?

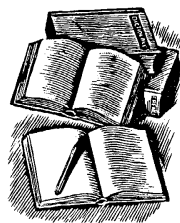
POEM FOR THE DAY 2, co-edited by Relta Bowen, Nick Temple, Stephanie Weinrich and Nicholas Albery; £16.99; ISBN 0-701-17401-3.

 Reviewed by John Papworth

WE have rendered our sense of some of the joys of the first *Poem For The Day* in a recent issue. Now here is *Poem For The Day 2* and a very worthy successor indeed. It delves into the vast ocean of English poetic riches and gives us something to memorise every day of the year. Its range covers far more modern poets than the first but manages, in the words of the Poet Laureate, to be a treasure trove, an adventure trail, and a cabinet of wonders. It may be possible to commend it more highly, but I am at a loss how to do so.


The regeneration of Russia will only come through its villages.

Alexander Solzhenitzyn



BOOKS

FAST FOOD NATION, by Eric Schlosser. PENGUIN BOOKS; 2002; £7.99; ISBN 0-141-00687-0.


 Reviewed by Patricia Knox

IT TELLS of the fast food industry; it tells not only about cutting costs by paying its largely teenage workforce the minimum, or less than the minimum, wage, and the low prices paid to farmers. While claiming government subsidies to provide training to its workers, who in fact receive little or none.

It tells of its links with other corporations, including Disneyland and toy manufacturers, of its advertising campaigns aimed at children aged 2–8 years, with promises of free toys with their meals, using children as ‘surrogate salesmen’ who have to persuade other people to buy .

It tells of its link with unsafe food practices, government lobbying and the car industry, of the large number of franchisees who are bankrupted, and its link with the obesity epidemic. An unpleasant, but informative, read.

A SPECIES IN DENIAL, by Jeremy Griffith. FOUNDATION FOR HUMANITY’S ADULTHOOD, 2003; pbk; ISBN 1 74129 001 5.

 Reviewed by Edward P. Echlin

THE title is deceptive. The human species is

in denial – of the earth’s limits and restraints, of human addiction to fossil fuel, of the damage fossil fuel burning does, of fossil fuel’s limits. Or as denying Americans say, ‘the hydrogen economy will next power the nations’ vehicle fleet’. This book’s denial, however, is not ecological. What humans are said to deny is ‘the human condition’. Through ‘resignation’ we deny innate human greed, aggression, proneness to evil which tradition called original sin, or human frailty and need of redemption. Griffith says ‘we shall overcome’, with the help of prophets like himself, Plato, Nietzsche, Freud, and Laurens van der Post. He does not mention Dick Cheney; but curiously includes the Jesuit palaeontologist Teilhard de Chardin. My own years in the Jesuits coincided with Teilhard’s last seven. I remember when he died in New York in 1955, and was buried in the St Andrew’s noviciate cemetery, on the Hudson. Teilhard believed and wrote that the whole earth community, with ‘the human condition’, would be brought together in the cosmic Christ, what he called ‘the Omega Point’. This is light years away from Griffith’s ‘DIY approach. Although Griffith firmly denies he is within ‘feel good’ new age charlatanary, his own views resemble new age charlatanism. Hence his foundation of the

giant mass is prone to drown out or to negate, the power of moral leadership. It was this factor that underpinned Gandhi’s insight ‘You cannot have morality without community’. It was indeed precisely this factor which enabled the splendours and the artistic glories of medieval Europe to triumph over the brute forces of savagery which were also part of its life; it was essentially a community and a small city-state structure where the moral dynamic of personal relationships was so strong. That factor was largely obliterated by the impetuously exploding power of the new industrial forces which emerged in the 18th and 19th Centuries and which continue to dominate our lives today.

It is this factor of scale which puts all the oratory about freedom and democracy on mass terms on the same level of irrelevance as those numerous reformers of one government abuse or another, whether about trade, global warming, war and so on. In terms of moral advance all are equally ineffective and talking to the wind; the power-brokers, because they are in business to broker power regardless, and the reformers because they cannot grasp the extent to which their own inevitable disempowerment on mass terms is the necessary element enabling the power-brokers to function at all.

This is why our peace movements constantly give the impression of well-intentioned people trying to play tiddlywinks on a ski run. It is the sheer ineffectiveness of such movements which is their guarantee of being able to exist at all. If they showed the least sign of being a serious threat to the power brokers and their objectives the latter would not hesitate to trash them into effective oblivion; they would become ‘commu-

nists’, ‘terrorists’, ‘enemies of the people’ or whatever.

The course of history cannot be diverted simply by moral aspirations; those aspirations need to take full account of the forces confronting them and to be aware that moral principles have their functioning base in human relationships, precisely those relationships power-broking can only successfully operate by destroying. This of course is exactly what is happening; national ordinances for ‘education’, care of the sick, law and order maintenance, and their market cousins of shopping malls, supermarkets, stock-market mergers, takeovers and consolidations, all of which remove power from citizen hands into the hands of giant forces over which they have no prospect of control, so that of course the vital moral integument of personal relationships is everywhere being destroyed. This is the key factor which explains why all our idealistically inspired reformist energies are being negated by the play of events.

The crucial challenge confronting us is to restore a structure of society where personal and moral relationships can flourish instead of being transformed into power relationships with institutions which disempower the individual, for that is why the institutions have emerged at all, to serve the purposes of the power-brokers at the expense of the power of individual lives they control and subordinate to their purposes.

It will be seen then that the quest for the restoration of the human scale is not some sentimental hankering for a past golden age that never was; in its ultimate terms it is indeed a question of our survival, truly a matter of life and death, and one demanding a positive response in human scale terms from all who deem they care. ■

QUANTITY VERSUS QUALITY: GLOBALISING RESPONSIBILITY

HRH The Prince of Wales

Increased reliance on technology in food and agriculture will inevitably exacerbate human misery and indignity. Fast Food has come to dominate the eating habits of millions but it is mostly junk food, having unpleasant physical results and quite tragic social consequences as small farmers are eliminated by industrial farming giants to produce it.

But the small farmers are fighting back, they have started the Slow Food movement and recently a conference which attracted 5,000 food producers was addressed by the Prince of Wales. As a public figure he is subject to almost constant media denigration which has to be seen as part of the campaign to undermine British institutions in order to encourage acceptance of the plot to hand over control of Britain to a bunch of crooks in Brussels. Not for the first time he has put us here in his debt by the cogency and wisdom of his words.

I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED that agriculture is not only the oldest, but also the most important of humanity's productive activities.

It is the engine of rural employment and the foundation stone of culture, even of civilisation itself. And this is just not some romantic vision of the past: today some 60 per cent of the 4 billion people living in developing countries are still working on the land.

So when I read 'visions', such as that for the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, for instance, which are based on transforming traditional, local agricultural economies, into 'powerhouses' of technological agriculture based around monoculture, artificial fertilisers, pesticides and GM, my heart sinks. The missing ingredient in these great plans is always sustainable livelihoods, and its absence increases the existing drift

towards degraded, dysfunctional and unmanageable cities.

The one resource the developing world has in abundance is people. So why are we promoting systems of agriculture that negate this advantage and which seem bound to contribute directly to further human misery and indignity?

It is a sobering thought that almost all of the next 1 billion of net global population growth (over the next 12 to 15 years) will take place in urban slums. In one slum alone more than 800,000 people, half of them under the age of 15, already live illegally in less than four square kilometres of a city. Even more sobering is the thought: what will these conditions breed for the future? Hopelessness, crime, extremism, terrorism? Who will deal with these chickens when they come home to roost on a globalised perch?

loved him. John's rollicking and quietly wise conversation brimmed with pertinent aphorisms. As a peerless battler for little things, the local, all God's creatures, he had little time for what he called plunderers of land and sea. An insult to creation, he said, is an insult to the Creator. As he awaited death, nearly deaf and blind and encouraging other earth lovers to the end, one of his last assertions to me was, 'don't worry, Edward, I'll never stop fighting.' And to his greenest of green burials in the orchard, John never did.

Edward P. Echlin

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LESSONS

SORRY I've been so out of touch. I was disappointed not to make it to Vermont last month; I've been putting time into trying to ensure that more of our culture is recorded and archived, and the meeting about that was at the same time.

Things here in the US are as bleak as I've ever seen them. I won't bore you with what you already know about why that is; suffice it to say the question of what is the most effective personal response to what is happening here and in the rest of the world has been forced to the top of many peoples' minds in a way I haven't seen before. It would be useful, I think, to have more inter-generational dialogue right now; somehow we avoided collective annihilation in the 50s, 60s and 70s despite a similarly bad political climate, and perhaps there are some lessons there.

Jeff Ubois

PO Box 8495, Berkeley
California 94707, USA

LANDMARK CHANGE

THE environmental and sustainability movement is growing, but its growth rate is hampered by the resistance of those who accept and benefit from the status quo. What we need is a breakthrough in communication with these people.

I am involved with Landmark Education which is in the business of creating breakthroughs. When I did the Landmark Forum, I transformed from the shy, frightened and timid person I used to be into the confident, courageous, powerful and joyful person I now am.

The Landmark Communication course has enhanced my skills in communication further. And the advanced communication course, which I have yet to do, will enable me to communicate powerfully and effectively with government ministers, the Prime Minister, etc.

If you feel you need a breakthrough in communication skills (or in any other area of your life) contact Landmark Education, 163 Eversholt Street, London NW1, www.landmarkeducation.com or 020 7969 2020.

Patricia Knox

Pen Llywenan, Bodedern
Holyhead, Gwynedd LL65 4TS

COVER TO COVER

THANK YOU for the latest edition of Fourth World Review. I always enjoy reading it from cover to cover and always I have poignant memories of Nicholas Albery.

The Review covers a wide range of topics and is wonderfully invigorating.

Margaret Chisman

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

ability, justice and peace we'll only know once we've arrived.

I liken the pain of the process that we are already engaged in to that of childbirth. There's likely to be pain aplenty, but the underlying virtue is hope, without which we'd be tempted, in the face of the enormous challenges before us, to throw in the sponge. Ultimately, I think it's hope that energises my efforts. Is that not true of you also, as you beaver away trying to spread the Fourth World message?

Helen Dew

12 Costley, Carterton
Wairarapa, New Zealand

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

I AM a little puzzled by the suspicion of free trade which I see in some FWR articles. Naively, I think that free trade would be highly desirable provided that it could be freed from the distortion caused by the unsustainably low price of oil and the machinations of the World Trade Organisation, with its promotion of the interests of the USA and the huge international chemical/pharmaceutical companies. But I suppose that is too remote a prospect to consider.

You often mention Schumacher and I recall that after one of his particularly stimulating talks about his vision of a better society I asked him how we were to get from here to there; he replied that he saw his place as presenting the vision and that it was up to others to work out how to bring it about. The current power-holders seem so well entrenched that the task seems more daunting than ever, in spite of the positive developments which have been achieved since his time – farmers' markets, some official encouragement for organic farming,

some small concessions to the conservation movement, and others. I notice that you still question whether UKIP can be useful unless it has a full policy for government. Although we are told that the party does now have such a policy I am not sure that it is necessary or useful. If UKIP is seen by the major parties as a serious rival they will be encouraged to produce new attractive policies on some other issues to ensure that it cannot rival them, whereas some of the single issue groups have achieved some influence because they demonstrate that significant numbers of voters are concerned about their subjects, so the major parties compete with each other to attract those voters.

I watch with a mixture of amusement and horror for the development of the Blair plan to allow citizens of mainland European countries who come here to vote in the referendum about the EU. Even at this stage I find it difficult to believe that such a crude way of attempting to skew the numbers will not be disallowed, but if he can get away with sending men to their deaths in the impossible and immoral Iraq war it seems he can get away with anything.

Angela Bates

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

EARTH LOVER

THE important thing about human life is what a person does – or fails to do – to heal and make the earth better than they found it. John Seymour was a tremendous lover of the earth. He devoted his life to what he called 'mother earth'. In doing so he poured out compassionate kindness towards all he met. He loved the whole soil community and instinctively children and animals

We have to face up to the fact that often the consequence of globalisation is less sustainability. It is all very well talking meaningfully of the need for 'globalisation with a human face', but the reality is frequently somewhat different. Left to its own devices, I fear that globalisation will sow seeds of ever greater poverty, disease and hunger in cities and the loss of viable, self-sufficient populations in rural areas. I don't think anyone would claim to have many answers, technological or otherwise, about what could possibly be done to reverse this process.

The 800,000 people in the slum I mentioned are not simply going to head back to the land overnight. But, surely, the first step to finding solutions to this problem is being willing to face up to both its causes and its scale – and this requires the globalisation of responsibility.

I have a feeling that by now it may be quite well-known that I am inclined to doubt whether GM food will be, on balance, a contribution to the greater good of humanity. In doing so, I am not simply being dogmatic. I believe it is important to ask whether some people's faith in the potential of this and other new technologies is a product of wishful thinking or of the hype generated by vested interests. In the long term are these methods really going to solve mankind's problems, or will they just create new ones? And how will we regulate them effectively? There are a great many examples of earlier, well-meaning attempts to control pests or improve the environment which have gone drastically wrong. I'm simply not convinced that we have absorbed the lesson that manipulating nature is, at best, an uncertain business.

Even if we discount the potential for disaster, there is still the question of whether this is the right direction to take. If

all money invested in agricultural biotechnology over the last 15 years had been invested in developing and disseminating genuinely sustainable techniques – those that work with, rather than against, the grain of nature – I believe that we would have seen extraordinary, and genuinely sustainable, progress.

Imposing industrial farming systems on traditional agricultural economies is actively destroying both biological and social capital and eliminating the cultural identity that has its roots in working on the land. It is also fuelling the frightening acceleration of urbanisation throughout the world and removing large parts of humanity from meaningful contact with nature and the food that they eat.

So this 'flight from the land' is happening both in developed and developing countries. Unfortunately, these trends towards urbanisation are almost inevitable while societies throughout the world continue to put a low valuation on their food, denigrate food to the status of fuel and abandon any loyalty to their local and indigenous farmers.

But there is another consequence too. There is now a growing body of evidence that suggests that in the so-called developed world we are in the process of creating a nutritionally impoverished underclass: a generation which has grown up on highly processed fast food from intensive agriculture, and for whom the future looks particularly bleak, both from a social and a health standpoint.

Slow Food is traditional food. It is also local, and local cuisine is one of the most important ways we identify with the place and region where we live. It is the same with buildings in our towns, cities and villages. Well-designed places and buildings

that relate to locality and landscape, and which put people before cars, enhance a sense of community and rootedness. All these things are connected. We no more want to live in anonymous concrete blocks that are just like anywhere else in the world than we want to eat anonymous junk food that can be bought anywhere. At the end of the day, values such as sustainability, community, health and taste are more important than pure convenience. We need to have distinctive and varied places and distinctive and varied

food in order to retain our sanity, if nothing else.

After all, the food you produce is far more than just food: it represents an entire culture: the culture of the family farm. It represents the ancient tapestry of rural life: the dedicated animal husbandry, the struggle with the natural elements, the love of the landscape, the childhood memories, the knowledge and wisdom learnt from parents and grandparents, the intimate understanding of local climate and conditions, the hopes and fears of succeeding generations. ■

SONG

And when our streets are green again
When metalled roads are green
And girls walk barefoot through the weeds
Of Regent Street, Saint Martin's Lane

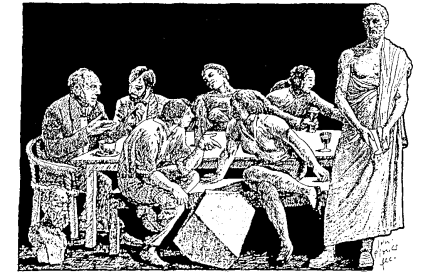
And children hide in factories
Where burdocked blooms and vetch and rust,
And elms and oaks and chestnut trees
Are tall again and hope is lost

When up the Strand the foxes glide
And hedgehogs sniff and wildcats yell
And golden orioles come back
To flash through Barnes and Clerkenwell

When governments and industries
Lie choked by weeds in fertile rain
For sure the few who stay alive
Will laugh and grow to love again

John McGrath
(1935–)

*With acknowledgements to Poem for the Day (Volume 1),
edited by Nicholas Albery*



FORUM

This is your slot, the place where you sound off and express your views...

JOY

I WANT to tell you what a joy I find Fourth World Review. In fact it is my favourite publication. For it says so much that others do not, or dare not, say directly. Or fail to say with such directness and courage. And I love the small, human, scale of it. If ever there was an example, in publishing, that 'small is beautiful' – and that talk can be walked – Fourth World Review is it.

Thank you for creating it and for continuing to produce it. It is a joy.

Moyra Bremner
1 Lambourne Avenue,
London SW19 7DW

20% over 50 years and 60% between 20 and 50 years. There was only one member of the audience who was over 70. You were probably referring to the lack of people in the 20–30 age group. This is a concern and yet it is perhaps not surprising if they are not attracted by talks of this kind knowing, as they do, that their age group will be in a minority.

Rachel Bridgeland
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CHILDBIRTH

I THINK there's a sense in which we can anticipate a Happy New Year. Stages in humanity's evolution tend to take place over several generations, and my take on things is that we're entering a new axial age. Assuming that humanity survives climate change, overpopulation, war, ecological destruction and social disruption, how long it will take to bring to birth a society whose values and practices reflect sustain-

CORRECTION

I WAS pleased to read that you enjoyed your visit to the Isle of Wight (FWR, 130). However, I was surprised you considered your audience to be elderly. I set my teenaged children Aidan and Lelia the task of calculating the percentage of people in each age group and, give or take a percentage, the figure came to 20% under 20 years,

could say that every viable political subject must have decision-making ability and be able to propose a new society. To form a multitude, in other words, the movements, while maintaining their autonomy and singularity, must be able to act in common and create a coherent and powerful political project. If they are not capable of this we may see a re-emergence of traditional political structures with leaders, spokespeople and unified agendas.

To understand the power and potential of these new movements it is useful to begin with a hypothesis: in each era the most powerful form of political organisation corresponds to the dominant organisational model of economic production. The centralised and hierarchical structures of the political party that emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for example, corresponded to the centralised and hierarchical organisation of factory production. This hypothesis is based on the notion that the primary form of political organisation draws on the relationships already existing in society, the ways we already relate to each other in our work and daily lives. If we are used to a boss and foremen directing us at work, the idea goes, then we will also need a political boss and lieutenants directing our political organisations.

When we look at the organisation of labour in contemporary economic production we find that the centralised command structures typical of the factory are no longer dominant. They have been displaced by the production of ideas, images, information, affective relationships and similar immaterial products. This production of immaterial goods is organised in horizontal networks that emphasize the cooperation, collaboration and communication among the various producers. Although only a

small portion of global labour is involved in such immaterial production, its model of decentralised network collaboration has become dominant and tends to influence all other types of production.

If this hypothesis is true then the most powerful form of political organisation will correspondingly involve decentralised networks. If we are trained in our work and our daily lives to collaborate in horizontal networks, we will be able too in political organisations collaboratively to make decisions, challenge the present forms of power, and propose an alternative society.

This is not to say that all leadership structures and calls for unified agendas should immediately be banned from our political projects, but it does indicate that the new forms of organising can be effective. Certainly the defenders of empire still operate primarily through hierarchies, and there is evidence to suggest that the chain of command remains an effective way of imposing power. But those in the top echelon of power are facing a loss of legitimacy as their hold over civil society is marked increasingly by coercion, and less by being able to garner consent. In contrast, horizontal networks offer more flexibility, and because they are evolving out of the emerging model of production carry a natural power and legitimacy. There is a good reason to expect therefore that horizontal, collaborative networks can emerge, slowly over decades, as the primary and most powerful forms of political organisation. Now it is a question of what we do with them. ■

Michael Hardt teaches in the Literature Programme at Duke University, Vermont, USA. He co-authored, with Antonio Negri, the books *Empire* and *Multitude*. With acknowledgements to Adbusters.

SECESSION ENTHUSIASTS Kirkpatrick Sale

IN THE SHADOW of the US election returning to power the most autocratic and illegitimate government the nation has ever experienced, three dozen people met over the weekend of November 5-7 in Middlebury, Vermont, to discuss and promote – seriously – the prospect of secession from the United States.

These three days of speeches, presentations and debate were sponsored by the Fourth World, an organisation based in England devoted to the separatist movements working for independence within the other three ‘worlds’, and the Second Vermont Republic, a grassroots movement that is ardently working for the secession of the state of Vermont to a republic like the one it had in 1777–91.

It is safe to say that not many people knew such organisations even existed, but the passion and earnestness of the weekend’s deliberations showed that there is a real feeling out there that the consideration of such an extreme measure as secession is not beyond the pale in times like these.

‘I think November 7 was a watershed occasion,’ said Thomas Naylor, a retired economics professor at Duke University who has lived in Vermont for a decade and is the founder of the Second Vermont Republic. ‘We’ve put the idea of secession into the public arena and found it has a lot of resonance.’ And indeed the local Rutland Herald gave the conference a prominent 13 paragraph story on Sunday under the head-

Radical Consultation II Vermont, Nov 2004

line ‘Secession enthusiasts meet in Middlebury’.

The pattern of the meeting, billed as a ‘Radical Consultation’, was to consider the options open to people wanting to challenge and change the current American empire and to test the viability of what might be put in its place, especially if, as the conference call argued, ‘it has most probably become unsustainable economically, politically, militarily, agriculturally, socially, culturally, and environmentally’. Among the choices considered and rejected were denial, compliance, reform and revolution, leaving the discussion to concentrate on decentralisation, separatism, and secession.

A statement signed by most of the participants at the end gave the sense of where that discussion led: ‘In our deliberations we considered many kinds of strategies for a new politics and eventually decided upon the inauguration of a campaign to monitor, study, promote and develop agencies of separatism,’ by which was meant ‘all the forms by which small political bodies distance themselves from large ones ... creating small and independent bodies that rule themselves’.

It went on to argue that ‘there is no reason that we cannot begin to examine the process of secession in the United States,’ and cited 28 separatist organisations already operating in the United States, including those in Alaska, Hawaii, Texas, New Hampshire, and Puerto Rico, in addition to Vermont. ‘The principle of seces-

sion,' it said, 'must be established as valid and legitimate.'

The model of secession put forth by the Second Republic people was specifically endorsed by the meeting. The Republic group has been working for two years and has put forth a Vermont constitution, a bill of rights, and a 128-page manifesto arguing that secession is in fact legal under the Constitution and that 'all American states have a moral and legal right to leave the Union'. They believe that 'a peaceful, democratic, grass-roots, libertarian populist' approach can

indeed make great inroads in that state.

The conference also specifically endorsed an effort to establish a think-tank to examine issues of sovereignty, independence and secession, and to create a journal that would find popular and scholarly approaches to this area.

It would seem that in a dark time of rampant 'political-capital' Bushism there are still people willing to shine a different light, and in that context the idea of separatism and secessionism might have real attraction to disaffected Americans.

THE MIDDLEBURY DECLARATION

Thomas Naylor

WE ARE GATHERED here to explore the possibilities of a new politics. We are convinced that the American empire, now imposing its military might on 153 countries around the world, is as fragile as empires historically tend to be, and that it might well implode upon itself in the near future.

Before that happens, no matter what shape the United States may take, we believe there is at this moment an opportunity to push through new political ideas and projects that will offer true popular participation and genuine democracy. The time to prepare for that is now.

In our deliberations we considered many kinds of strategies for a new politics and eventually decided upon the inauguration of a campaign to monitor, study, promote, and develop agencies of separatism. By separatism we mean all the forms by

which small political bodies, dedicated to the precept of human scale, distance themselves from larger ones, as in decentralisation, dissolution, disunion, division, devolution, or secession, creating small and independent bodies that rule themselves. Of course we favour such polities that operate with participatory democracy and egalitarian justice, which are attainable only at a small scale, but the primary principle is that these states should enact their separation and self-government as they see fit.

It is important to realise that the separatist/independence movement is the most important and widespread political force in the world today and has been for the last half-century, during which time the United Nations, for example, has grown from 51 nations in 1945 to 193 nations in 2004. The break-up of the Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia are recent manifestations of

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this fundamental trend, and there are separatist movements in more than two dozen countries at this time, including such well-known ones as in Catalonia, Scotland, Lapland, Sardinia, Sicily, Sudan, Congo, Kashmir, Chechnya, Kurdistan, Quebec, British Columbia, Mexico, and the Indian Nations of North America.

There is no reason that we cannot begin to examine the processes of secession in the United States. There are already at least 28 separatist organisations in this country – the most active seem to be in Alaska, Cascadia, Texas, Hawaii, Vermont, Puerto Rico and the South – and there seems to be a growing sentiment that, because the national government has shown itself to be clumsy, unresponsive, and unaccountable in so many ways, power should be concentrated at lower levels. Whether these levels should be the states or coherent regions

within the states or something smaller still is a matter best left to the people active in devolution, but the principle of secession must be established as valid and legitimate.

To this end, therefore, we are pledged to create a movement that will place secession on the national agenda, encourage non-violent secessionist organisations throughout the country, develop communication among existing and future secessionist groups, and create a body of scholarship to examine and promote the ideas and principles of secessionism.

'Whenever any form of government is destructive of these ends – life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness – it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government ... in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness' – Declaration of Independence 1776.

HAIL THE MULTITUDES: A MOVEMENT OF MOVEMENTS

Michael Hardt

ONE DISTINCTIVE feature of the most powerful political movements that have emerged in recent years is their refusal of central leadership and unified programmes.

This was clear, for example, in the 1999 World Trade Organisation (WTO) protests in Seattle as well as in all the various anti-globalisation and anti-war protests that followed. It is a distinctive feature of the Zapatista movement. In this new framework there is no single movement, but a

movement of movements, communicating in horizontal, decentralised networks.

'Multitude' is the name that my colleague Tom Negri and I give this emerging form of social organisation. It is composed of different people who act in common and collaborate, without denying their differences, freedom or autonomy. Its democratic character is clear. What is less clear is whether the movements today can effectively challenge the present structure of power and pose a real alternative to it. In the language of political philosophy we

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