



# COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWSLETTER

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## An Interview with Jerry Mander: The Globalization of Trade

by Scott Savage

*Mary Ann Lieser and Scott Savage were recently in San Francisco, and took the opportunity to speak with Jerry Mander, a long-time supporter of their work at the Center for Plain Living. Mander is the author of the pivotal anti-electronic media book, Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television, and, more recently, In the Absence of the Sacred: The failure of technology and the survival of the Indian nations.*

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**Plain Magazine:** You're working on free trade mostly right now, is that right? I don't want to call it 'free trade'—you're working on 'globalization issues'—can I put it that way?

**Jerry Mander:** That's correct. Among other things, I'm working on a book, an anthology, together with Edward Goldsmith, the editor of the British publication *The Ecologist*. He's sort of the leading ecological battler in Europe over the last 30 years. He and I are compiling the book, provisionally titled *A Case Against the Global Economy*. It's going to be a very large anthology with about 40 pieces in it.

The first part of the book is a summary of all the dimensions concerning what is wrong about organizing life around global economic systems, from the point of view of how these systems break down non-western cultures, to corporate domination of economies, and the resulting detriment to communities, and the destruction of small-scale farming.

**PM:** I was going to say, a lot of food connections.

**JM:** Yes, one of the dimensions is globalization of the world food supply, with its serious effects on jobs, labor and who has power over whom. And, of course, the many dire effects of this control on the third world. Globalization destroys whatever sovereignty indigenous peoples have managed to gather.

Also in the first part of the book is a small series of articles about what the consequences of globalization will be. Then the second part, "The Paradigms that Failed," discusses the operating paradigms by which the global economic system is motivating itself. These include continual economic growth, market economies, the idea of "development", the idea of the supremacy of science, the idea of free trade.

PM: Would efficiency be one of these paradigms?

JM: That's a good one. It's mentioned in a few places, but we don't have a separate section on efficiency. The questions are, Efficient for whom? and, Efficient how?

The third part of the book is called "The Engines of Globalization," and has to do with the instruments by which globalization is taking its current form. Those instruments are mainly corporations and technology, and the way they interlock with one another.

Then the last section outlines the importance of returning to the local economy and strengthening that economy. Maybe Plain should write something for that section!

PM: We're always talking about Wendell Berry's slogan on this topic. However, when environmentalists hear it, they generally are infuriated. First off, it's confusing because they think we're saying what they are used to repeating, which is "think globally, act locally," but we say "think locally, act locally" and they just go nuts. They say that's wrong, that's way too provincial.

JM: Wendell Berry, also Helena Norberg-Hodge is included, as well as a couple of Native writers and others writing on local economies. There is a piece on Gandhi.

So the book is one thing I am working on. I also work here at the Public Media Center, where we undertake various ecological issues, and I work at the Foundation for Deep Ecology, as you know.

PM: I'm wondering about an idea that you have shared many times, something that you just touched on in describing *A Case Against the Global Economy*—that institutional organization is itself a technological artifact of our time. It's an idea I have some trouble putting across to people. I wonder if you could say some more about it.

JM: The institution I talk about most is the corporation, and things like trade agreements, which are not so much expressions of technologies as they are in a symbiotic relationship to technologies, and to each other. Each makes the other one possible.

Corporations invent the technological forms, which then add power to the corporation, and then the corporation needs to create organizational structures in the world which will also aid the expanded operating possibilities made possible by technology. A computer is an example of a technology which makes globalization both possible and necessary.

In the modern world we have technologies of globalization. We have computers which tie the world together through cyber-space. People come to think of computers as empowering instruments because they get to operate them and feed into them. And they are empowering in that narrow sense. But the people who are empowered the most by them are those in corporations, who can instantaneously move resources around the globe and control their mega-form internationally, globally.

These transnational corporations are made stronger—they're actually made possible—by the new computer-laser-satellite technological linkups that enable them to move their resources and act globally in a manner they could not do as well nor as fast in the past.

PM: So while we're all acting locally, and living locally, the larger corporations are...

JM: ...Are acting globally and living globally and affecting globally. Actually, responding to the current situation by thinking locally and acting locally, is, for me, a little bit insufficient. I think it's the right attitude to have, but at the same time you must be totally aware of the global because it is acting on you all the time. You can do a lot of building up and protecting of things locally, and still see them wiped away because of what is decided in world trade talks in Brussels. In any case, these new technologies actually make the mega-corporations possible on the global scale at which they now operate.

Other technologies of speed, like television, and transportation; other forms of communication; space exploration—which enables resources on the globe to be photographed—all these things work together to speed up the development process to where global corporations conceive of themselves in global terms. But then they need to also have the ability to *operate* on global terms, without restrictions. The way this is achieved is by creating international structures that don't permit of any local resistance.

By local, I don't mean your town, or your community. I'm talking about the United States or any country's ability to exercise legal control over corporate activities, to the point that the United States, or any other country, can no longer make environmental laws, or consumer laws, or any kind of laws that protect people or nature or workers or living conditions or enact any restrictions that affect trade.

If it appears that there are restrictions on free corporate trade, then rules are made through instruments, such as trade agreements, which say, "All nations agree that they must not escape trade in the following ways..." and they make lists of the ways each country may not restrain trade. If a country violates the rules, they can be challenged.

Europe will be able to challenge U.S. laws and the U.S. will be able to challenge Europe, and so by reciprocal process back and forth we void one another's laws. Then there will be no restrictions on corporate activity. This is all instigated in some ways by advanced technological forms that themselves require operation on a global scale.

**PM:** Technologies which require that they, too, be operated without any legal restraints, in order for them to work properly.

**JM:** Yes. It's really not a conscious conspiracy, in the way you would normally think of a conspiracy, as much as it is a conspiracy of forms. This is what I mean by its being technological, in the sense that once you have technologies like computers and satellites and all of those linkups which organize

existence in a global manner, and you have corporations set up to use these technologies with great efficiency and ability, then you will have international political and economic systems which correspond to this globalized structure.

Or else you are going to have political and economic resistance to it. But resistance has already been wiped out by the operation of these forms.

**PM:** The end of this process is rule by global corporation.

**JM:** You have some of that now. And it's going to be much more the case under free trade, because corporations will have real power over national sovereignty.

Through trade agreements and advanced technologies, they will have the instruments with which to operate on a global scale. By operating on a global scale they can decide, for example, that they want the forest in Borneo for a material resource, and the government of Borneo will not have the ability to tell them, "You can't take these trees, because we want to preserve this place." This kind of protective law will be seen as restraint of trade.

**PM:** In the long run, when most of the world has been culturally and economically supplanted—Americanized—if Borneo (to use your example) at some point decides not to cooperate, then it could be cut out of the loop. I mean the people will have lost their ability to, say, grow their own food, and they'll be told, "Okay, if we can't have your forest, you can't have access anymore to the world food market."

**JM:** I wish that would happen. Because then you would have communities of people who are resisting. But these communities are being drawn into binding commitments *not* to resist. In fact, it is intolerable to the emerging global system that people be allowed to remain in their traditional cultural and economic spheres, because *they* are the market.



Bill Clinton says we need to expand our markets. The reason for this is that we have pretty much used up the United States as a market. People are up to their necks in consumption.

**PM:** Everybody has lots of stuff.

**JM:** And there is only so much stuff you can have, actually, even though consumer goods are always being updated so that people will need to purchase the new—computers for example. But still, there is just a diminishing return on this market, and so you need to have China and Indonesia and India as markets. And in order to have them as markets, they have to want to be like us.

**PM:** They have to want what we're selling.

**JM:** Television is how this is achieved. Television is the ideological invasion. The exposure to western culture through television creates in other cultures the desire to be like us and to buy our products.

**PM:** Television is powerful. It has worked quite well here in the U.S. However, I see an ongoing process whereby Americans are becoming surfeited with consumption. I suppose that by the time we are ready as a society to turn away from consumerism, we will have hooked the rest of the world on it.

**JM:** The idea of globalization is to replace these consumers with other consumers. What is going to happen when U.S. corporations—which are already engaged in relocating outside the U.S.—begin moving even more rapidly out of this country to other, low-wage countries? When all production is moved to Mexico?

**PM:** That's no problem. After all, we're an information economy now. We don't need to have production here. We are just the guys who, for example, figure out the flight schedules to move a banana harvest half way around the world, so that people can buy bananas year 'round instead of growing and preserving their own fruits. We're the service sector,

the middleman. We don't need to actually produce anything here in the United States. Or so we're told.

**JM:** Jeremy Rifkin notes in his new book, *The End of Work*, that the number of real jobs in the United States is shrinking. Everyone is being replaced by robots. Not only in manufacturing, automation is occurring in all sectors, including the information sector.

The service sector is where the new jobs are supposed to be. The industrial sector is finished, because it's all robots. The agricultural sector is being replaced by biotechnologies and automated factory farms. And it is claimed that these losses do not matter because we still have the service sector, the information economy. But you go to the library and there are no librarians! You go to the bank and there are no bankers! Go to McDonalds and there's hardly anyone working there. Most of the work is being done by machines.

**PM:** And those are all layoffs.

**JM:** Which brings us back to the question of what constitutes efficiency. Wherever you see it reported in a newspaper that, for example, General Motors has improved its efficiency, what is meant is that they have replaced their workers with machines. They have "down-sized" their workforce in order to improve efficiency.

**PM:** This is similar to what has already occurred in agriculture, where modern agriculture has replaced people and communities with technologies based on ready access to cheap energy. The emerging global economy seems based on the same idea that we can just cart things all over the world. That you can sit in your home and video-shop, and somewhere in Indonesia a robot will produce the requested item, which will be delivered to your door the next day.

**JM:** However, as Jeremy Rifkin points out, as automation increases and corporations move out of the country, the market in the United States will begin to diminish, because people won't be able to buy things. So there will be a deflated market potential

in this country. Which brings us back to the importance of building markets in other countries. People in these countries have to be given some buying power—but they are being paid such low wages that they won't individually have much buying power anyway. There is a climax coming, where these two contradictory conditions will come together.

PM: And of course that's where it all started. At the beginning of the age of mass production and the mass economy, with Henry Ford saying he wanted to pay his workers enough so they could buy his car.

JM: That's right.



## Information Highway: Mental Pollution

by Jacques-Yves Cousteau  
from the August 1995 issue of the *Calypso Log*

We constantly have the opportunity to choose, not just among things for sale in stores, but also among ideas and literary or artistic creations. And since choosing means rejecting that which is not chosen,

the resulting choice lies at the origin of the variety of cultures, usages and traditions that enrich civilization.

Reducing or suppressing freedom of choice leads to what Ignacio Ramonet, chief editor of *Diplomatic World*, has questioned as "one mindedness," then to intellectual dictatorship. Historically, dictatorships abolished choice, purely and simply. The one taking form today would impose one mindedness by flooding individuals with information leading to general confusion: television by cable and satellite, information superhighways, multimedia, high resolution, interactive, Internet, cellular phones, CD-ROM, heaven knows what else!

This cornucopia is poured on us in exchange for our money and, more grievously, our time. For it takes time to reflect and to make useful choices. Time that we no longer have for our families, for our friends, for shaping our opinions. Our children, left to themselves, devour Big Macs, pizzas and Cokes, spending three hours a day in front of a TV that violates and kills, reading Stephen King, listening to Nirvana while explaining that Mozart is old hat and wondering whether Montaigne is in the Alps or in the Pyrenees.

The mental pollution that results from this is perhaps more grievous than all those that degrade our planet. Last month [in Cannes for the MIP-TV awards], I took up the defense of the image, the beautiful image that should reflect the real world and not the fads that pervert it. Today, I want to contribute to saving what we have left of good sense and intellect.

Let us be serious: The toll imposed at the gateway to information superhighways is much too high. We already have great difficulty using the data available to us on the information byways. The mind is to be cultivated and irrigated, not flooded.



## Neighborhood As Community

by Olaf Egeberg

I'm seeing glimpses of another world in my neighborhood. You probably can see glimpses in yours, too. Here, in our small part of Takoma Park, Maryland, smack on the border of Washington, D.C., we have our problems like any other neighborhood: encroaching crime, barking dogs, potholes and snits.

But sometimes, when I walk through the neighborhood or meet with other neighbors, there are moments when I can see another world, a more caring and enjoyable world than usual, where there's mutual support and a lot more fun.

I glimpsed it last night at a meeting at Tim and Meg Laren's house, where there was a gathering of a few neighbors who wanted to talk about creating a local network. At one point while we were struggling with some problem, I recognized that humor was coming out and so was care and mutual regard. Something wonderful was going on. During the course of the meeting we seemed to reach a connection together that was unusually lovely, glimpses of how we can have Heaven right here.

Glimpses came last week, too, when I was sitting on the porch with a couple of neighbors. We were talking about food. The air was warm and the sun was laying its last rays on the grass as someone's children splashed and squealed in the little blue plastic pool. They were happy. Everyone was happy. There was Heaven again!

And last Monday, when I got together with the other fellows who walk with me on our regular night for the neighborhood crime watch, Lew and Tom. I know these men are busy. I know there's stiff competition for their evening hours. But there they were again, ready to walk for a safer neighborhood. Again, a glimpse of a world that works well. Here were people who were committed to helping the neighborhood move forward and were putting their time and energy into making it happen.

There are fleeting moments in my neighborhood when that glimpse of true neighborliness comes into view. And I get a peek at those times at what we really are capable of being for each other. I get a glimpse of something so precious that if it were in greater supply, Heaven would be happening here.

Certainly in this time of social confusion, those brilliant glimpses of a more evolved world are hard to come by. Angry people are bombing government buildings, the environment is suffering. Lives are being injured in troubled homes. The future looks quite dark and unsettling. But we're a very new species as species go. And it's obvious we're still not very good at knowing how to live well together. Perhaps, socially, we're not even yet born.

If we make it through these difficult times, if we endure and evolve our abilities at living together, sooner or later we'll start finding ourselves in a world that is so different and so good that it is unimaginable to us now. I believe our social evolution is going to show us how to do well here so we can be who we fully can be and gain a good life together. We're the human family, capable, magnificent, learning to love.

I'm saying this because at the same time that we're finding our present world so painful and dark, we're also finding how amazingly capable we are, capable of doing incredibly bad things or things that are incredibly good. It just depends on where we put our attention. We're capable of learning and exploring and accomplishing in whatever direction we choose to go. At no time in our history have we seen such a full measure of our abilities as we do now. The computer chip, the space lab, the DNA coding, these are all astounding accomplishments that weren't even in our dreams 100 years ago.

There's another reason why good times are coming. We're a lot more than we've been seeing ourselves to be. It doesn't matter how stupid or mean or confused we've been. It doesn't matter who we each are or what we look like, we're nonetheless the Universe in all its magnificence and capability, finding its way here in the form that we are. So what's to

stop us from learning how to create a successful society here?

So how to proceed? It doesn't get us anywhere to just lie around, basking in the bliss of who we are. It doesn't get us there just to dream of the remarkable life we can open up for ourselves.

Recognizing how troubled our world is, being aware of the level of crime, poverty and general bad stuff, what greater action can we have at this time than to learn how our life together can work well for us here in our neighborhoods and globally, too?

So we start right where we are, in our human-scale communities, our neighborhoods. We need each other now. Our amazing possibilities don't open up by our acting alone. Our neighborhoods are training grounds for us to learn a good life together. They are the home school to help us create the supportive and enjoyable society of which we're capable.

To me the best first step into the world that's waiting for us, is to reveal the remarkable array of resources we have for each other, right where we are, in our neighborhoods, just an easy walk away, because our neighborhoods are *treasuries* just waiting to be opened. The treasuries I'm talking about are the different skills we have, the different resources, information, contacts and goods and enjoyments and wild options we hadn't considered before, all adding up to an impressive treasury that each neighborhood can offer. Our different capabilities and experiences, our different areas of knowledge and tangible goods give us an advantage as neighbors that we each can never get on our own.

Normally, however, that treasury remains hidden and unused because there's nothing to let us know about our shared riches. The treasury remains unknown and unopened, unless, of course, there's an exchange system that's been set up. Having an exchange system means having a neighborhood Exchange Directory, and having an exchange directory brings the treasury into view.

In my current neighborhood this is happening already, because our "neighborhood exchange directory" lets us know what skills or information or goods or enjoyments or helpfulness each has to offer another. It's a neighborhood Yellow Pages, with a twist.

The other day I needed an accountant to solve a major problem for me, and there, in the directory, was one right around the corner. Earlier I needed a graphic artist to do a book cover, and there was a good one two streets away. I wanted someone to teach me more about using the Internet and there was one, again, just a five-minute walk away. They were neighbors. The accountant even brought his son over. They all remain friends.

Directories like this are called *exchange* directories because they are set up for mutual gain. Most offerings will be for an exchange of some reciprocal offering (your babysitting or helping hands for something you want in return). Mutual satisfaction is the key here. And no government money is needed.

The exchange directory in my neighborhood near Washington, D.C. has over 300 participants and about 450 different offerings. Many offerings, like "mountain bike info" or "nature walks" or "dance partner" aren't for any exchange at all. People offer some things simply for the pleasure of it.

Every neighborhood needs an exchange directory. Every sizable apartment building does, too, or condo complex or whatever human-scale community you're in. Having an exchange directory connects you with neighbors that are good to know and opens up a treasury of immediate support and enjoyment that otherwise remains hidden. Money is not needed in exchanges, so your expenses are cut. And pollution is cut because a neighborhood provides a walking distance support system, a place to meet a lot of needs without using your car.

Give it some thought. In a world where love is lacking, exchange directories can help more caring communities grow.

Since I had recently moved into the neighborhood and hardly knew anyone, I started by writing a letter to my neighbors. I told them what an exchange directory was (giving examples of offerings) and that one was starting in the neighborhood and why it would be a gain for those who joined in. I kept the letter personal and light and asked them to think of what they wanted to offer and to get it in to me.

After making about 100 copies of the letter, I left it in mailboxes or at the doors of the people who lived around me in hopes that it would interest enough neighbors to give us a beginning group. No one responded! I couldn't fathom why I got such a poor response when having a local exchange would be such a great thing.

So I visited a few neighbors to see if they got the letter and what their questions might be. I'm glad I did. Even though these folks hadn't sent in a directory listing, most of them were, nonetheless, enthusiastic about the idea. They just couldn't think of what to offer. In the course of our conversation they realized they could probably run errands or do babysitting or give a helping hand or good listening or the skills they use in their regular jobs. People could also change their listing at any time and no one had to be included if she didn't want to be.

The first directory was an important milestone. Even though we only had 11 participants in it, even though it started that small, it was still the beginning of an exchange system that could now be filled out. In the two years since then, our directory has grown to now include 317 neighbors. Some of the entries came in spontaneously. Most, however, came by our getting out more letters and following through. This became easy as time went on because neighbors helped out.

We have our own neighborhood currency, too. We created it because there's a problem with making exchanges if the person who wants what you're offering isn't offering anything you would like. That problem is solved nicely, however, if your neighborhood has its own currency. A few of us in the neighborhood formed a committee to design, print

and oversee how our currency was to be used. Common sense showed us what to do. Learning about "Ithaca Money" in upstate New York was also helpful.

One "Share," as we call our currency, is smaller in size than a dollar bill and roughly equals an hour's work or \$10. Having "Shares" in your wallet is an invitation to spend them, which means more neighborhood interaction and mutual gain. Local currency not only makes exchange easier to transact, it also keeps energy, creativity and helpfulness circulating inside the neighborhood, building up connections and support with each exchange that goes on.

Getting more currency to spend is easy enough. You can get it when another neighbor wants what you are offering. And, you can get it by helping the neighborhood out in some way. Getting an ad, for example, or an article for the newsletter will earn you an extra "Share".

One of the beauties of this system is that no one needs to keep track of transactions. No staffing is needed so the operating costs are incredibly low. Printing is about the only cost involved and that is taken care of by contributions or yard sales or by a few ads from local merchants. You can also host a party or other neighborhood event and raise funds there, or you can find a way to get the initial directory out free.

There is a sample of a neighborhood start-up letter that you can have if you send a stamped, self-addressed, return envelope to the McGee Street Foundation, P.O. Box 56756, Washington, D.C. 20040. You'll also get an example of the currency our neighborhood is using and some references. These are all good tools for local living and for building a caring world where we are.

We're waking up to grand adventure and high enjoyment. Realizing our capabilities, seeing how much more we each are, suddenly opens up our life. How good can our life together become for us now? It's all ours to discover, starting right where we are.





## Alternative Digs: Housing That's Affordable, Innovative and Responsible

by Catherine Roberts Leach

reprinted with permission from the August 1995 issue of *Country Connections*, P.O. Box 6748, Pine Mountain, CA 93222; 12 issues for \$28.

It isn't true that we should all aspire to the great American Dream: a big house all to ourselves, with four bedrooms, three baths, and a two-car garage. Not having the slightest chance of affording such an abode myself in the foreseeable future, I've been thinking about alternatives. How, really, should we live? And in what, exactly? The answer turns out to be: We have terrific and enticing choices that reveal the typical single-family, wood-frame, copy-cat construction of the American Dream as the nightmare it truly is.

Reading the Worldwatch Institute's report, *State of the World 1995*, taught me that buildings consume one-sixth to one-half of the world's physical resources. Wood is the material of choice for houses in many regions, and in North America and Scandinavia, almost all new houses are made from it. Further, write Nicholas Lenssen and David Malin Roodman, in the Worldwatch Report, "Erecting a typical 150-ton home in the United States sends

some 7 tons of refuse to the local dump. At the same time, for every six houses or apartment buildings constructed in the country, one falls to the wrecking ball—about 150,000 tons each year...Even as buildings become more opulent, they often wear out in a matter of decades or are torn down to make way for newer ones even sooner, compounding the waste."

That's a very far cry from the millennium-old adobe construction that is still around today. It seems that in modern times we've been pursuing housing choices that are as backward and unsuitable as possible—almost completely ignoring the lessons from the past (and present!) that are in plain view, and in so doing, we are jeopardizing the future.

I still have a many-years-old file in my overstuffed drawer labeled "The House." I grew up in apartments on the Isle of Manhattan and, aside from some wonderful summers in a humble fisherman's cottage on Fire Island, had never lived in a HOUSE until I moved to the mountains and my husband and I rented a humble double-wide with a view.

So maintaining a file called "The House" isn't out of character, and in recently sorting through the yellowing clippings and my sorry attempts nearly fifteen years ago to draw my unusually-shaped, ideal home (with a giant tree trunk rising through the center!), I found that most of my interests in alternative housing and building are reflected there. I kept a 1986 piece from the *Los Angeles Times* about an underground home; a *New Age Journal* article, reprinted in *Utne Reader* about a Berkeley architect who said that for the past fifty years, "architects have been screwing up the world"; a piece in *Garbage* (now defunct) about a kitchen garbage and recycling center; an unsourced clipping on alternative home technology that begins, "The single-family dwelling, especially in its typical American incarnation, is one of the most energy-wasting devices on the planet"; a reprint called "Finding Low-Cost Property"; and—I should admit—a fair number of torn-out real-estate pages from Sunday magazines glossily showing indescribably elegant, grace-

ful, and ridiculously expensive houses and grounds that fit nicely into my "pure lust-not just" category.

The research and clipping continues unabated. It is heartening to know I'm not alone in observing that the way Americans build houses and stick them on the land is not only ecologically stupid and harmful, but may well be one of the reasons we run around today in an alienated funk—far from the comforts of "home."

A house is not just a house. It reflects our values and culture. In our society, it usually means saddling hard-working families with high energy bills and a burdensome mortgage that will likely never be paid off—for a house that will deteriorate along with the payments. Living in the typical house means being holed up (no more front porches) and waiting until it's time to get the car from the garage and drive to work many miles away. It means getting into fights with the neighbors over fences, tree limbs and weed whackers. For most of us, it doesn't improve our quality of life at all, and it doesn't encourage us to participate in our communities. The vaunted House can be a drain and a sorrow.

But it doesn't have to be. Why shouldn't all homes be socially-friendly, durable, well-placed, energy-efficient, inexpensive, earthquake-resistant, fire-proof, and termite proof? We have access to the most plentiful and time-tested building material available, free for the taking—earth. Architect Nader Khalili says we can build earthen construction homes with our own hands and never have to pay a mortgage. He teaches workshops and classes in various earth building techniques as part of the Cal-Earth project of his Geltaftan (derived from the Persian for earth firing/baking/weaving) Institute in Hesperia, California. His latest innovation, "Super-adobe," is a process which weaves a building out of long, continuous coils of earth-packed sandbags and wire, without scaffolding or forms. He projects the cost of an owner-built, three-bedroom house at just \$3,000 in materials. I've seen examples of his earlier prototypes of ceramic (fired clay) homes, with repeated arches. Earthen construction is beautiful in its simplicity—elegant and durable. It provides natu-

ral cooking, heating and ventilation. It can contain such pleasing amenities as earthquake-resistant, smooth, curving walls, windcatcher/energy towers with built-in flutes for wind music, and solar ovens. "Why do we need to destroy forests, pollute the world with toxic material, and desperately beg the machines to build our houses?" asks Khalili. "We must be able to sculpt any building without cutting a single tree or buying a lot of manufactured materials."

Cob construction, an ancient building technique new to the U.S., involves hand-formed lumps of earth, mixed with sand and straw, which dries hard and is used like adobe to make self-supporting, load-bearing walls. The walls, arches and vaults are hand-shaped, and therefore unique and sculpted. In winter, the building absorbs energy from the sun during the day, and at night re-emits it in the form of heat. It stays cool in warm weather. The Cob Cottage Company in Cottage Grove, Oregon, is teaching the techniques to non-expert students eager to build their own inexpensive domiciles. A small, 200-square-foot cob cottage can be constructed for about \$500 in materials.

There are other construction techniques being used today: rammed earth, strawbale, pressed adobe blocks—even tires. And what about tipis, tents, mini-houses and other "living lightly" structures that don't warrant a lifetime of debt?

Imagine the effect on our lives if we could simply subtract from our budgets the monthly housing costs most of us cough up with our high utility bills. Think of the hated jobs we could quit that we needed for the good money. Imagine the pride of building our own homes from raw and recycled materials that don't gouge the planet.

It just takes stepping back and realizing we don't all have to march, lockstep, into the modern developer's planned community, or the trendy architect's impractical and wasteful ego-building. It takes asking how much we want to contribute to the squandering practices that hurt our wallets and the environment. And it takes putting pressure on those who

would maintain the status quo. The writers in *State of the World 1995* tell us, "Since most structures are put up or purchased with borrowed money, banks, insurance companies, and other lenders have enormous influence over what gets built. Traditionally, lenders have treated innovation with skepticism—and higher interest rates—since it increases the perceived risk of a project." That thinking has to change.

Starting from scratch isn't the only way to live in responsible housing. Eco-renovation is ongoing in many parts of the country. The Eco Home Demonstration Home (a remodeled craftsman cottage) in Los Angeles has been a model of sustainable urban living for years, and is now undergoing an environmental renovation that will include finding sustainably-harvested wood for kitchen cabinets, windows and dining room furniture, upgrading to the most energy-efficient appliances, and acquiring solar panels to charge their electric car batteries to make it completely pollution-free.

The nonprofit Rocky Mountain Institute in Snowmass, Colorado, is the nation's leading research center on energy efficiency. It recently published two books about home energy savings and green building. Founders Amory and Hunter Lovins educate individuals and building industry professionals toward finding new solutions to old problems. Their own headquarters, in a cold mountain climate, gains 99 percent of its heat from the sun and the heat from the people and equipment inside.

Another idea: I don't own land, or a house, but I can borrow one or both for a while, in exchange for my labor. Property caretaking has probably been around forever, but *The Caretaker Gazette* bimonthly newsletter, out of Pullman, Washington, now offers advertisements for landowners and potential caretakers across the country who are trying to find each other. The *Gazette* will send a few reports on caretaking if you send them a number ten business-sized envelope. This rural experience can be a good and inexpensive way to try out an area, before deciding to move there permanently. Recent college grads, retirees, corporate castoffs, or others who want to

live on farms, ranches, homesteads, nature preserves, or national and state forests and parks in exchange for caretaking duties can discover a practical alternative to mortgage paralysis.

Sharing is another way to cut costs and environmental damage. CoHousing, where resident-owners live in individual units, but also enjoy community facilities like child care, work studios, libraries, and dining halls, and share in the planning and development of the eco-sensitive compound, is probably the closest I'm willing to get to communal living. But my husband, who doesn't share even in Chinese restaurants, won't go that far. I bet he'd like it once he tried it—having people around with whom you may even have something in common, retreating to your own complete dwelling when you want to be alone, and admiring a bunch of older folks and children meandering around auto-free grounds.

There's a man in Berkeley, California, who says we should "no longer look at affordable housing as a separate issue from ecological living, livelihood, and social-environmental justice." Architect and planner Ken Norwood and his partner, Kathleen Smith, founded the Shared Living Resource Center and provide planning and design services for ecological housing and cooperative community living. Their recently published book, *Rebuilding Community in America: Housing for Ecological Living, Personal Empowerment, and the New Extended Family*, says intentional communities, extended and voluntary families, group houses, and "urban clusters" are the way to go. Single-family housing and living, they say, not only contribute to sprawl and wasteful land use, but can be responsible for alienation, loneliness, family fragmentation—even poverty. I agree.

Clearly, how we live and in what kind of dwellings have broad implications for us individually, for society, and for our environment. Refusing to chase the impossible dream can be a powerful and liberating experience. It's always thrilling to think creatively: home can be a wide world of alternatives. I'm going back to my drawing board.

## Readers Write

### About Kerala, India and Mitraniketan

The article in your October-December issue by Will Alexander on the Indian state of Kerala is quite inspiring. I consider the three most promising events in the history of the 20th Century to be: the emergence of the European Community, the development of the workers cooperatives at Mondragon and the social/ political/economic miracle of Kerala. The events in Kerala bring to mind Arthur Morgan's participation in the culture of India.

During the British rule of India a missionary named Ralph Templin was run out of the country for being too "pro-native." He then settled in Yellow Springs, where he became acquainted with the educational ideas of Arthur Morgan. He wrote them up in detail, and gave them to Gandhi, who, in turn, incorporated them into a booklet entitled "Basic Education" which he circulated in India. Arthur Morgan came across a copy of this and, not knowing its origin, exclaimed, "This fellow has some good ideas!" He proceeded to circulate the booklet in America.

Later, after India got its independence, a commission was set up to make plans for higher education in India. Arthur Morgan was asked to serve on this commission. He responded that higher education in India seemed mainly concerned with training civil servants, and he was primarily interested in the common people—especially the villagers. They replied, "You're just the man we want." So he went.

On the Commission he put forward the idea of a system of rural universities. The only person interested was Zakir Hussein, the Muslim member of the Commission. After ten months the Commission prepared a report, and rural universities were not in it. Morgan and Hussein then prepared a minority report, but the Commission didn't want one—so they included the rural universities in their report. That is how India got its rural universities. Hussein later became president of India—partly because of his role in promoting the rural universities.

Arthur Morgan never met Gandhi, who had been assassinated not long before, but in a real sense he carried forward an important part of Gandhi's work.

Arthur Morgan's next involvement with India was totally different. A village youth from Kerala, K. Viswanathan, had somehow gotten an education, and had spent some time with Tagore. He had a dream of returning to his village to improve its level of health, education and economic well-being. But he was told, "Don't waste your life. There's no future in the village. The future is in the cities!"

Viswan got a scholarship to study in America, where he met Arthur Morgan—the first person who encouraged him to return to his village. He lived for a time with Arthur and Lucy Morgan and worked at the Antioch Bookplate Company and at a farm near Yellow Springs. In the evenings he studied in the Community Service library. At about the time he planned to return to his village to carry out his dreams, a disaster loomed. His family, in financial straits, had arranged a marriage for him with the daughter of a wealthy family. This would have bailed out his family but would have wrecked his community plans. Luckily it happened that someone in India owed Arthur Morgan a substantial sum. Arthur transferred this resource to Viswan's family. The marriage was avoided, and Viswan's plans went forward. When he did marry it was to a woman who actively shared his dreams.

Viswan's project is known as Mitraniketan (the abode of friends). It introduced family planning, education, improved strains of livestock, better farming practices and improved health. Lee Morgan, Arthur's grandson, set their printing project in motion and organized a credit union.

What role did Mitraniketan have in "The Miracle of Kerala"? It was certainly a minor one, but not insignificant. Once again the ideas and activities of Arthur Morgan bore fruit.

*Ernest Morgan, Burnsville, NC*

Thank you for your offer to send me a copy of the original of Will Alexander's talk about Kerala [CSNL Oct-Dec '95]. I raised the question [of his resources] because I have been to Kerala and try to stay current on it, and have contact with a Keralan who is very involved in social action. One of the things the contact and the reading have pointed out is the dependence Kerala has on the inflow of money from citizens working in the Gulf area States, and how much the Gulf War and mideast politics have impacted Kerala's economy. I was curious if Mr. Alexander had used sources that would be worth pursuing. I'm sure that may be the case, but what you have published from him is useful. I'll watch for more articles by Alexander and stay up on other articles/publications on Kerala. I look forward to the next newsletter.

*Gary R. Woodruff, Decatur, GA*

For years I have followed the news and progress of Mitraniketan and Viswanathan in the C/S Newsletter. I was very much aware of the efforts of A.E. Morgan and C/S to provide guidance and financial support to Viswanathan's leadership. That support has obviously born fruit as delineated by Alexander's article in the last issue of the C/S Newsletter. I feel Alexander's article should receive widespread circulation. It illustrates what a few dedicated souls can do to ameliorate the shortcomings of Western cultures— in one little corner of the world.

*Rudy Potochnik, Modesto, CA*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Antioch University's M.A Program on Environment and Community Starting April 1, 1996

*How do we prepare for the next generation of efforts to protect our environment? How can we better integrate community and social concerns into our work on environmental issues? How can we as individuals become more effective agents of positive change—whether we work for advocacy organizations, governments, businesses or our communities?*

Antioch University, a pioneer in public interest education, now offers a 2-year, limited residency Master of Arts program that responds directly to these questions. This program is designed specifically for those who would prefer not to leave their jobs or relocate in order to pursue graduate study. It provides a strong interdisciplinary framework for understanding and working constructively with the social, institutional, and economic structures that underlie environmental problems. Coursework is grounded in case studies and examinations of specific institutional settings in which environmental issues are played out. Students also develop skills in conflict resolution and other social-change processes.

Antioch's M.A. Program on Environment & Community should be of interest to anyone wanting to foster environmental stewardship and accountability within and across our institutions, governments, communities, and businesses. The program is designed for: staff of nonprofit organizations and foundation officers, government staff and officials, environmentally-oriented business professionals, planners and landscape architects, as well as educators and media professionals.

Over the 2-year period of the program, students attend three on-campus sessions totaling six weeks, with all other study and work done in their communities. The three residency sessions include intensive course work, seminars, and other collaborative work between students and faculty. In between these sessions, students complete reading and writing assignments, pursue individualized study, engage in supervised field projects and complete a thesis project.

Throughout the program, each student works closely with a member of the program's core faculty, who serves both as faculty advisor and chair of the student's degree committee. Students also enlist the support of at least one external academic advisor. Students and faculty are in frequent, substantive contact during the periods between the residency sessions by phone, mail, fax and computer modem.

The program is built around five core courses that are integrated with one another and with the student's individual study, research, field work, and thesis project. These courses are: Environmental Philosophy, Environment & Economics, Community-Based Change, Environmental Policy, Regulation & Law, and Case Studies in Environment & Community.

Faculty teaching in this Program bring a combination of academic and practitioner experience in a variety of areas, and a deep interest in exploring the relationships between the world of ideas and the world of practice in the pursuit of beneficial environmental and social change. The core faculty are assisted by participating faculty from Antioch's graduate programs in Conflict Resolution and Intercultural Relations, and by adjunct faculty drawn from leading practitioners and researchers.

Clyde Murley, Program Chair and core faculty member, holds an M.A. in Energy & Resources and an A.B. in Environmental Sciences from the University of California at Berkeley. His academic studies focused on the interrelationships between environment, energy, economics, culture and social well-being.

He has worked as a public-interest environmental planner, analyst and advocate, both with the Natural Resources Defense Council and the California Public Utilities Commission. He focused primarily on energy planning and the environmental, social, and health effects associated with energy use. He also conducted research and advocacy in the areas of hazardous waste management, groundwater contamination, and the impacts of urban runoff on wetlands ecology and public health.

Shierry NicholSEN, Environment & Community Program core faculty member and the original designer of the program, holds a Ph.D. in comparative literature from Cornell University and an M.A. in counseling from the California State University at Northridge. She has a background in philosophy and social theory and studied with Theodor Adorno and Jürgen Habermas of the Frankfurt School of

social theory. She is the translator of a number of works by Adorno, Habermas, and other members of that school, and has published widely on their thought.

Dr. NicholSEN, former Director of the Individualized Master of Arts program at The McGregor School, has a background in nontraditional education and has been instrumental in developing the graduate programs in Conflict Resolution and Intercultural Relations at that school.

For the first class, which enrolls April 1, 1996, the program will be accepting qualified applicants on a continuing basis until the class is full. The class then attends the first residency session May 24 through June 9. The three residency sessions are scheduled approximately eight months apart. The second group of students will enroll in January, 1997.

Tuition is \$7,500 per year, and there is a \$30 application fee and a \$400 enrollment fee. Students are responsible for transportation, lodging and food expenses associated with the residency sessions, and for any costs associated with the individualized portion of the program.

Our admissions counselors and faculty will be glad to speak with you about your educational goals and tell you more about this Program. Please contact us at: The McGregor School of Antioch University, 800 Livermore St., Yellow Springs, OH 45387; or call 513/767-6321 or 767-6325.

### **OEFFA Announces 17th Annual Conference**

The Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association announces OEFFA's 17th Annual Conference theme, "It's Simple...Farms=Food." This year's conference will be at Muskingum College in New Concord, Ohio, March 16 & 17.

Speakers will include Lynn Byczynski, editor of "Growing for Market," a monthly, hands-on journal for market gardeners; Traugott Groh, author of "Farms of Tomorrow" and a leader in community

marketing; Bob Leader, a third-generation family farmer from Indiana; and Elizabeth Bird (Consortium for Sustainable Agriculture) discussing the current state of sustainable agriculture research.

Registration fees range from \$20 for students to \$60 for nonmembers registering late. Single-day fees for nonmembers are \$45 for Saturday and \$35 for Sunday. OEFFA members may register at reduced rates.

For more information or registration materials, contact the OEFFA office at P.O. Box 82234, Columbus, OH 43202, or call 614/294-3663.

### 1996 Community Land Trust Conference

The Community Land Trust Conference, sponsored by the Institute for Community Economics (ICE) and hosted by New Columbia Community Land Trust, will be held in Washington, D.C., March 15-18.

Highlights include a tour of New Columbia's neighborhood and projects; up-to-date information about government housing programs, workshops on housing policy, as it affects CLT's and other PARCC housing groups, and on a other topics; lobbying opportunities with Congressional representatives; and a chance to catch up with what's going on in the world of CLT's. Fees range from \$230 for members registering before February 15 to \$350 for nonmembers registering after February 15. There are 1-day rates as well. For more information and a registration form, write: Julie Orvis, Institute for Community Economics, 57 School St., Springfield, MA 01105-1331 or call 413-746-8660; 746-8862 (fax).

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### Membership

Membership is a means of supporting and sharing the work of Community Service. The Basic \$25 annual membership contribution includes a subscription to our quarterly Newsletter and 10% off Community Service-published literature. Larger contributions are always needed, however, and smaller ones will be gladly accepted. Community Service is a nonprofit, educational corporation which depends on contributions and the sale of literature to fund its work. All contributions are appreciated, needed and tax-deductible. Due to added postage costs, foreign membership, including Canada, is \$30 in U.S. currency.

### Have Your Friends Seen The Newsletter?

Please send the names and addresses of your friends who might enjoy receiving a sample Newsletter and booklist. If you wish specific issues sent, please send \$1 per copy.

### Editor's Note

We welcome letters to the editor (under 300 words) and articles (700-2000 words) about any notable communities or people who are improving the quality of life in their communities. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you wish the article returned. The only compensation we can offer is the satisfaction of seeing your words in print and knowing you have helped spread encouraging and/or educational information.

### Address Change

If there is an error on your mailing label, or you are moving, please send the old label and corrections to us. It increases our cost greatly if the Post Office notifies us of your move, and you will not receive your newsletter promptly.

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