



# COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWSLETTER

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*Community Service Newsletter is published four times a year by Community Service, Inc. Our purpose is to promote the small community as a basic social institution involving organic units of economic, social and spiritual development.*

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## Notes on the Community Service Conference on Simple Living

by Bill Felker

*"What will help our values? What will hurt them?"*

This year's [October 1996] Community Service conference challenged participants to review their most fundamental values, and then to put them into practice with their families and in the larger community. The challenges ranged from a keynote call for spiritual renewal to applications of simple living in neighborhood building and even in such things as the composting of human manure.

The opening session Friday evening at the Outdoor Education Center in Yellow Springs was packed with local residents and with visitors from as far away as Hawaii. Scott Savage, the director of the Center for Plain Living, the prime mover of this spring's Second Luddite Congress, and a staunch, unabashed Christian, gave the address.

Savage is a short, stocky man. His dark blonde hair recedes above wire-rimmed glasses. His beard is maybe three or four inches long. He was dressed the way he was at the Luddite Congress: a white shirt, black vest, pants and shoes. Even though he had removed his Amish-style straw hat, its aura remained, held in place by his posture, his clothes, his message.

He talked about the "culture of lies" created by the media. American culture is a "pretend culture," he said, "giving us nothing but hollow images and false promises.

"How many lies do your children see if they watch television? Incrementally, what is the effect of that deception?"

He compared American media culture with that created by the state behind the Iron Curtain: "Think what that deceit did to the countries of the Communist block," he said. "Think what it is doing to you, to your family."

What are the lies of the culture of duplicity?

- Your life will improve if you buy something.
- You are the center of the Universe.
- Arranging one's life around working to buy products is a good way to live.

The result: "We end up worshiping the creation, and not the creator." Everything we do or think is tainted by that worship. And so even our plans to

escape, our dreams of simple living, are all tarnished by the materialism we have nurtured.

Activism won't help much, according to Scott Savage. He rejected the demonstrations and protests of the sixties: "They created the seeds of their own destruction." He also scorned the suburban idea that giving enough money to worthy causes will remedy society's ills. Marches on Washington and checks to our favorite charity may do some good, but won't change the civilization itself, he said, and they won't redirect our lives.

"What we need to do is to disengage from modern life. We need to cleanse ourselves before we can take the right action. The culture of lies is inside our heads. It contaminates our thoughts and desires. We need to spend time "not taking part" in the system. We need to listen, to wait, to make truth as we can."

We need to reevaluate technology: "What will help our values?" Savage asked. "What will harm them? What will foster community? Can there be community outside a community of believers? What if we started living our values? How would you live if you really lived your values?"

And to questions by the audience about what concrete things one might do to achieve the detachment he was preaching, Scott Savage gave no response. Those who were at the Luddite convention understood that he didn't want to offer a quick fix, preferred not to suggest concrete tools for simple living, sought instead a radical change of heart, a complete conversion. The others in attendance would perhaps understand his focus after the following evening's "Meeting on a Concern" dealing with materialism and community.

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*"How much do you really need?"*

The next day's program began with small-group sessions that allowed participants to get to know one another. We introduced ourselves and talked a little about why we were there. The variety of back-

grounds and interests was immediately apparent in the group I was with.

Mary, retired, a gardener in her 70s from Virginia, had come to listen.

Jim, a college administrator, was also here to listen.

John was a social worker with environmental concerns; he had been curious about what kind of meeting this would be.

Cindy had just returned from several months in Africa, and was in the process of simplifying her life. "It's really hard to make the adjustment back to the United States," she said. "The trip made me think: How much does a person really need? How much can you get rid of? How do you compare the values and lifestyles of a tribe that lives on cow's milk, blood, and urine, and is perfectly healthy— with our society?"

Susan was an ex-New Yorker who had just bought a house in the Vermont countryside. "I moved to find the spiritual transformation I promised myself at the Luddite Congress this spring," she said. "I wanted to be one-on-one with people. And so I moved to the country and I started a talk show on the radio. I'd never done anything like that before. I just did it, I just started talking about my life and how I wanted it to change.

"The wonderful thing is that two thirds of the people who call in to talk to me want a simpler life too. People are grateful for my radio show, and I think it's because it gives them a chance to say what's really important to them."

Susan's mother, Kate, was excited about what her daughter is doing: "I'm one of her star pupils," she said. "I've been exposed to the garden already. A few days ago we went out to dig potatoes. I've seen how tomatoes grow too."

Winnie, living on 45 acres and feeling she should share the land with others, was interested in exchanging ideas about stewardship at the Conference.

Mark, another veteran of the Luddite Congress: "I've made the plunge," he said. "We don't have electricity, don't have running water. When people come to our place, at first they're just kind of stunned by what they see. Then they start asking questions about how we did it, and about how they can do it themselves. For us it's just what happened when we decided to be whole."

Vivian, a student at the survival school run by Tom Brown Jr., had come to find out about simple living skills, was especially interested in wild edibles.

Corinne, was making kombucha tea, buying her clothes used, driving a car her husband knew how to fix.

Ed, from his wheelchair, was recycling.

Jim was living an ecologically sound life in the city: "I guess I've come here to feel a little less weird—and I'd like to learn to simplify more."

There was another Mark, a social worker, wanting support and encouragement for decisions he was thinking of making.

Linda was remodeling her kitchen with used materials. "It's so much fun," she said, "doing things for yourself." She was converting her yard to all native plantings too. "You don't have to live in the woods to be close to nature," she said. At first she met with hostility from the people who lived around her. "But then in the spring neighbors would ask me: 'Where did you get all those flowers?'"

"Slowly you get people to think. They're just frightened; they hang on to what they have."

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### *"How would you really like to live?"*

After talking in small groups, the participants came together with the people who were scheduled to give the concurrent afternoon sessions.

They heard Joe Jenkins, an expert on the composting of human manure, Eileen and Jim Schenk, who had worked to develop an ecological neighborhood in Cincinnati, and Peg and Ken Champney, who discussed aspects of life in the "Vale," an intentional community just south of Yellow Springs.

Jenkins made the process of composting human waste seem an acceptable and relatively trouble free process. The term "waste" itself, he said, was a misnomer, since almost anyone could recycle excrement and turn it into a useful agricultural supplement.

As unusual as his topic was the man himself, full of dry wit and stories about his life in the country. He had taken, he said, a vow of poverty more than a quarter century ago—a vow which had become an excuse to invest all of his earnings as a roofer into his business, and to avoid paying personal income taxes. From humble beginnings in a tepee on rented land, raising his family of six children (all birthed at home) on a thousand dollars a year, Jenkins had come to own (as a corporation—not an individual) considerable wealth.

The opposite of Savage's Bible-based idealism, Jenkins' wry pragmatism promoted doing one's own thing and listening to the drummer within. For him, the earth was important—but he had not started from an ecological perspective but rather from a need to survive and make a living. He had composted his own manure as an efficient, economical way of managing his property without a septic tank and sewer line. He is now turning his knowledge of getting by into getting rich and, coincidentally, promoting a process which he believes will eventually replace the current ways of dealing with human excrement.

The Schenks challenged the conference participants from another direction. "How would you really like

to live?" they asked. "How would you like your neighborhood to look?"

"Humans have done pretty well at reproduction and survival," they stated. "Now success is destroying us. We're over grazing. Other species do this too, but when they run out of food they move on or die. As for us, we have the ability to change the way we live, to stop over consumption and overpopulation."

Founders and Directors of the non-profit ecological educational association, IMAGO, Eileen and Jim told about the measures they had taken to transform the Price Hill district of Cincinnati into "a caring and cooperative neighborhood that is committed to sustainable living."

They asked participants what they would want their neighborhoods to look like, and gave examples of what an intentional neighborhood might be. Although their example of Price Hill struck a few people as too upscale and middle class, without the kind of racial and economic diversity which they had been looking for, it was a sample of what happens when people take the future of the region into their own hands.

Suggestions included things like a neighborhood garden club, a plan for reducing energy, tree planting, development of local shopping, organized fitness walks, nature labs, walking trails, and the protection of integral and surrounding lands.

The Champneys gave another perspective on intentionality— theirs grounded in their many years of living and working within the Vale community near Yellow Springs. They talked about resisting the Vietnam war by withholding taxes, described the success of the Vale school which offered parents more control over the education of their children, as well as some of the other workings of that group of like-minded people.

They also explored the idea that it's just more fun to live simply, close to family and friends. In their afternoon session, Ken, Peg and the participants exchanged stories about their favorite celebrations and

rituals— sharing tales of work projects such as making maple syrup, home-made ice cream— creating a portrait of community less as a formally organized social structure than as an outgrowth of family and neighborly commitment.

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*"To free yourself from materialism, float free like cottonwood seed in the dawn sunlight."*

The session Saturday evening picked up from where the keynote address left off. Instead of leading the scheduled panel discussion, Scott Savage asked participants to sit quietly and take part in a Quaker-style "meeting on a concern" during which they would focus on the effect of technology and materialism on their experience of community.

He admonished people not to dialogue with one another, but rather to stand and talk only if and as the spirit moved them, putting aside any idea that carried too much of their egos with it. The purpose of the process was to bypass the mental and spiritual contamination caused by materialism, and to allow thoughts to appear either from a form of free association or with guidance from the "Spirit."

Silence settled over the Outdoor Education Center, and everyone sat without speaking for a full quarter of an hour before a young woman stood up to sing a verse from a familiar hymn. After that, with the ice broken, women and men rose and made brief statements every few minutes for the next half hour. They spoke from the heart, sharing thoughts which indeed, as Savage had hoped, seemed to bypass the logical and the methodological, and went directly to the most private and personal concerns.

One woman's suggestion: "To free yourself from materialism, float free like cottonwood seed in the dawn sunlight," was representative of that kind of emotional or spiritual response.

The young man from Kentucky who had abandoned electricity and running water spoke of something he experienced just prior to coming to the Conference:

"Before I came here, I walked to the garden, and I noticed two brilliant maple trees, one red and one yellow. Everything seemed perfect. I felt like crying. The thought came to me that each of us is perfect, and we all know what makes us who we are, makes us special. There's something in us like that moment. That's why we're here, to find that moment and to protect it. We sense the pace of society is too fast, infringes on what it is in us that is special. We need more time for those moments that make us realize who we are."

Other comments, such as the following, attempted to identify moral issues that related to the effects of modern technological society: "I'm feeling how strongly we own our problems today. I wonder if that's not a manifestation of the control we're constantly promised by the media. To the extent we accept self-centeredness as a value, we lose the experience of love. A key to having community is to stop owning self-centeredness and start asking for help."

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*"Why have any lawns at all?"*

The discussion that followed this and other events gave participants a chance to query one another about their philosophies of simple living and self-sufficiency. There were disagreements, of course, many people diverging from Scott Savage's blanket rejection of most modern technology, and espousing more moderate positions. Some thought for example, that machines in themselves were neutral, and that it was the person who made them good or bad. Others, such as Savage, felt that technologies were far from neutral, and that the use of fossil fuels, for example, was generally harmful to the earth and therefore to humans and other species.

Typical of the exchanges was one about whether it was better to use a push lawnmower or a gasoline powered mower. When it appeared that the push mower person was about to triumph in her defense of the simpler technology, she was countered by a man who proposed that sheep were even better than some tool which required a factory and the proces-

sing of metal. That appeared to be the end of the matter when someone else got up and questioned the whole idea of cutting grass: "Why have any lawns at all?" she asked.

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Balanced with free time for walking in the autumn woods, with songs and stories by Georgi Schmitt and with noncompetitive games led by peace educator Linda Qualls, the Conference offered a varied fare of dialogue, play, meditation and fellowship, ending with a Sunday morning session in which about a third of the participants reviewed the different aspects of this year's program, brainstormed possible improvements to the format, and talked over themes for next year's conference.

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# Sufficiency and Counter-Productivity

by Charles Siegel

*This talk is based on Charles Siegel's book, THE PRESERVATIONIST MANIFESTO, available for \$12.95 postage paid from 800/842-8338. Reprinted from the April 1996 issue of PLAIN, 60805 Pigeon Point Dr., Barnesville, OH 43713.*

When Scott invited me [to the Second Luddite Congress], I told him I was glad to come, but I am not a Luddite.

Calling ourselves Luddites marginalizes us. It also prevents us from thinking precisely about when technology is useful and when it is destructive, if we begin by saying we are Luddites who are simply against technology. It also cuts us off from the mainstream debate.

But it is crucial that we contribute to the mainstream debate, because Americans are almost ready to come over to our way of thinking. I am politically active on transportation and city planning issues. It is almost impossible to build new freeways and some existing freeways have been deconstructed. The two most important developments in city transportation are the revival of streetcar suburbs by new urbanists, and the revival of streetcars, now called light rail. In Portland, both together. People realize that the modern city built around freeways, shopping malls, and suburban tract developments is not as livable as the streetcar suburbs built before World War I, and they are ready to reject this failure of modern technology. But we do not help if we say we are against all technology—not only against freeways, but also against light rail.

We need to think precisely about when technology is useful and when it is destructive.

One key criterion for limiting technology is utility, the simple question of whether products are useful. As people become more affluent, they move from

consuming bare necessities, to consuming luxuries, and finally to consuming products that are not useful at all.

You can call this sufficiency; knowing when we have enough. Increasing consumption beyond the point of sufficiency brings very small benefits but continues to create environmental and social problems. Ivan Illich first pointed out that we have reached a point where it is counterproductive. I think this is because the environmental and social costs of growth are greater than its benefits.

Transportation and urban growth issues are an obvious example. Before the 19th century, walking was the only form of transportation for most people, and cities were built like the older European cities: all apartments, four to six stories. With the development of railroad, ferry, and horse-pulled omnibuses in the 19th century, the middle-class was able to move to row houses with small back yards. After the 1870's, with the development of light rail—horse cars on rail, cable cars, and finally toward the end of the century electric trolleys—people were able to move to streetcar suburbs—free standing houses, small front and side yards, adequate backyard, about 15 people to the acre.

Some people prefer living in the city, but for those who do not, the change to row houses and then to street suburbs brought real benefits: quiet, less congestion and more green space.

During the 20th century the automobile and the freeway systems let people travel much longer distances and live in much lower density neighborhoods. But if we compare modern suburbia with the streetcar suburbs, we can see that this additional growth made cities less livable. Streetcar suburbs were safer for children to play in, because there was no high speed traffic on the streets. They were more neighborly, because people walked to local shopping and sat on their front porches rather than drive to regional shopping malls. Despite their higher densities, they were even greener and less congested, because there were no cars.

Streetcar suburbs were already sufficient. Suburbia did not bring any extra benefits, but it did create extra costs.

One key to rebuilding our cities is limiting automobile speeds. In the country, freeways have destroyed small towns and replaced local shopping with regional malls; better to have local roads with lower speeds. In cities, one possibility is a speed limit of 15 mph for cars, with higher speeds allowed for rail. People would use rail for regional shopping and commuting, use cars for recreation and for local trips in their neighborhood. Because of low speeds, regional malls would not drive out local shopping and neighborhoods would not be replaced by low-density sprawl. Bicycles could ride along with car traffic.

A key point here is that we have to limit technology to make it possible for people to do for themselves. Unlimited automobile speed drives out other alternatives. In a suburb built around freeways, you cannot get anywhere without driving. Limiting speed would make the automobile one part of a balanced transportation system. People could still get around on their own, walking or bicycling for most of their everyday activities.

There are other examples of the counter-productivity of some technology and of the need to limit technology to allow people to do for themselves.

In the case of health care, technology and economic growth improved health dramatically until recent decades. For example, before the nineteenth century, average life expectancy in most European countries was less than 40 years. By the mid-twentieth century, it was 70 years. It is generally agreed that the improvement was caused primarily by a rising standard of living, for example by better nutrition and sanitation. Better medical care also contributed. For example, we are obviously better off because we have antibiotics to cure some infectious diseases and vaccinations to prevent polio.

By the mid-twentieth century, life expectancy stopped increasing. In the United States, life expectancy hovered around 70 years during the late 1950's and the 1960's, though the standard of living was rising dramatically and medical expenditures were soaring. These supposed improvements no longer contributed to better health.

For example, a better food supply and nutrition had always been a major factor in improving health, but by the 1950's most Americans were already eating too much meat and fat; if we "improved" the food supply

further by producing even more meat, it would increase heart disease.

Likewise, many medical treatments were being adopted in the 1950's that were useless. Doctors began to yank out children's tonsils at the first sign of infection, and it has been shown that the great majority of tonsillectomies were useless. Hospital birth replaced home birth almost completely, though studies have shown that home birth is actually safer than hospital birth if prenatal examination shows there will be no complications. Americans are not only born, but also die in hospitals rather than at home, plugged into elaborate machines which prolong the process of dying when there is no chance of recovery.

By mid-twentieth century, the standard of living and health care were already sufficient. Growth was no longer improving health. Though the standard of living was booming, and spending on health care was growing even faster than the overall economy, life expectancy stopped growing in the 1950's and 60's, and leveled off at 70 years.

In the 1970's, though, there was a sharp increase in life expectancy, from 70 to 75 years. But it is widely recognized that this did not result from the rising standard of living, but because people did more to protect their own health. For example, jogging, improved diet, and giving up smoking.



Again, we can see that technology and growth no longer improve our well being. Instead, we have reached the point where the way to improve our well being is to limit technology and do more for ourselves.

Likewise, in education, increased spending stopped bringing benefits after the mid-twentieth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century, urban elementary schools had 40 or 50 pupils, and only six percent of Americans went to high school. Student achievement did improve during much of the century, and the expansion of high schools early in the century obviously gave many people new opportunities to learn. During the 1960's and 1970's, though, spending per pupil increased almost four-fold in real terms but achievement declined dramatically.

The amount we were spending on schools at the beginning of the 1960's was already sufficient. Studies beginning with the Coleman report of the 1960's showed that increased spending did not improve achievement. A comprehensive review of the literature by Eric Hanushek of the University of Minnesota has shown that there is now no correlation between achievement and increased spending or smaller class size.

But modernization and growth were undermining the family's role. During the 19th century, most production moved from the family to the factory, but families still had important economic functions: making clothing, cleaning, mending, cooking, raising children, providing entertainment (eg., middle class women were expected to be able to play the piano.)

The family lost these functions also during the twentieth century. The mass media provided entertainment. Ready-to-wear clothing replaced home sewing and mending. Vacuum cleaners, dish washers and other appliances took over much of the work of cleaning. By the 1950's and 1960's, the family was losing its last functions. Home cooking was being largely replaced by frozen dinners and fast food. Most of the work of raising children was being done by schools, nursery schools, head-start programs,

and day-care centers. There was talk about family togetherness during the 1950's, but (as C. Lasch has said) suburban parents had actually begun to think of themselves as older friends and companions to their children— rather than as the people who were responsible for raising them.

Here too, improvements will come not if we spend more money, but if we limit technology to let people do more for themselves. A few suggestions:

Limit media by requiring not only V-chips, but also devices that let parents limit the amount of time their children watch television. Require stations to display warnings that studies have shown that children who watch television more than one hour per day have lower grades.

Reduce the use of day care by offering more flexible working hours and ending discrimination against people who take care of their own children. Any government or employer benefits to subsidize day care must be matched by benefits to people who make much greater economic sacrifices by cutting their work hours to care for their own children. Major corporations have begun to offer flexible working hours to parents of young children. But if flexible hours were offered more widely, they could also be the key to ending economic growth: they give the average person the option of living more simply and spending less in order to work less.

America's per capita GDP is twice as much now as it was in 1950. The average American could cut down to working half-time, and we could still live as well as Americans did in 1950— a time when Americans were very affluent. However, today most people have the option of working 40 hours per week or nothing. As we have seen, they would be better off if they could consume less, cut down their hours, and have more time to do for themselves— for example, more time to exercise or to raise their children.

But the problem is that much of the consumption that Americans do is involuntary.



Most people who put their children in day care would rather care for them at home but they feel they have no alternative. In 1945, Americans lived on half as much money (adjusted for inflation) and had more time to care for their own children. But at that time, you could still get around by walking in most neighborhoods. Most Americans now live in neighborhoods where they do not have any choice but to own two automobiles.

Books that talk about voluntary simplicity suggest that people should shop less and buy simpler clothing, and these sorts of things are important. But for people to really simplify their lives—to be able to get anywhere near the 1950 level of consumption—we also need political limits on technology.

There are many criteria for limiting technology, and I have just scratched the surface by focusing on one—the criterion of utility—showing that much of what we consume does not increase our well being at all—is in fact, useless. There are many other criteria. Obviously, for the sake of our health, we need to ban toxins. We need to evaluate whether a technology makes people passive, like television, or is a tool they use actively, like the telephone—or like some uses of the computer. Another criteria is whether the technology breaks up the family of community.

This sort of limit on technology requires a fundamental change in our political thinking. Until recently, liberal and leftist politics has been based on the sort of technological optimism that was common early in the century. The left has recognized that technology can damage the physical environment. It opposes freeways—unlike liberals from the Roosevelt through to the Johnson administrations, who wanted to build more freeways.

But the left still demands more spending on health care, more spending on day-care, more spending on schools. It does not realize that, in these cases too, we have reached the limits of growth, and we need to let people do more for themselves rather than spending money on more services.



Americans would listen if we developed this new politics in a way that fits into their lives. For example, even real estate developers have caught onto the new urbanism and realize that Americans want to live in streetcar suburbs, where they know their neighbors and can walk, rather than in suburbs built around freeways, where you have to own two cars. Likewise, Americans have realized that they can do more to improve their health through exercise, improved diet, and elimination of smoking than they can by spending more on high-tech health care. And Americans want to have the time to take care of their own children, even if it means working shorter hours and earning less money.

People are ready to listen if we show them exactly where technology and growth have failed and should be limited, but they will not listen if we say we are Luddites who are against all technology.

*Charles Siegel is Transportation Chair of the Sierra Club, San Francisco Bay Chapter, and the founder of the Preservation Institute. He has written policy studies on city planning and health insurance.*

## Book Reviews



**SIMPLE LIVING:** *One Couple's Search for a Better Life*, by Frank Levering and Wanda Urbanska; A Penguin Book; © 1992; 272 pp softcover; \$11.95 (plus \$3.00 s/h) from Community Service. Ohio residents add 6% tax.

by Bill Felker

This is a book written by a young thirty-something husband-wife team who left their hectic and dissatisfying life in the fast lane of Los Angeles and moved to manage the Levering family orchard in the hills of Virginia.

While the authors do not quite overcome the stylistic challenges of writing as a team (their efforts sometimes gave this reviewer the impression he was reading one of those third person family Christmas card letters), their book is probably one of the more credible "back to the land" stories available for urbanites who have never heard of such a thing as simple living.

People who are already living simply, however— or even those on a very tight budget— may not be too impressed by some of the sacrifices made by Levering and Urbanska in their search for simplicity.

For example, as someone who could not afford a new car until he was well into his forties, I was not all that struck by their tortured decision to buy a used car instead of a new one when their Volkswagen Rabbit broke down.

And as someone who remodeled his own kitchen because he didn't have the money to do otherwise, I found their hiring of a contractor to remodel their

kitchen for \$10,000 (instead of having him build a new kitchen addition) not quite as "simple" as the book's title had lead me to expect.

Other economic "discoveries" made by Frank and Wanda, such as cooking at home instead of eating out and "washing dishes rather than buying throw-aways," will sound somewhat elementary to anyone who has had to live on the minimum wage or a fixed income.

On the other hand, for educated and protected children of the middle class who are caught in the dead-end rat race of careerism, this view of simple living should be well worth reading. Through interviews with individuals and couples across the country, Levering and Urbanska offer credible case histories of people who have abandoned the strenuous security of corporate employment and who have set out on their own to find meaning in their economic, social and spiritual lives.

The most inspiring models of all are Ralph and Clara Levering, Frank's Quaker grandparents who planted their orchard from scratch in the early part of this century, and Sam and Miriam Levering, Frank's parents who nurtured it to success through hard work— and still found time to volunteer for matters relating to peace and social justice.

If Frank and Wanda turn out like Ralph, Clara, Sam and Miriam— and this book leads one to believe that they will— then their search for simplicity should bear abundant fruit.

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**THE HOMEGROWN GENERATION:** *Building Community in Central Minneapolis*, by Burt Berlowe; published by Central community Council; © 1994; 353 pp softcover; \$14.95 from Central Community Council, 2522 E. 24th St., Minneapolis, MN 55406.

by Ernest Morgan

Burt Berlowe, a freelance writer and community organizer in Minneapolis who has published four

books and written for many local and national periodicals, recently published *THE HOMEGROWN GENERATION: Building Community in Central Minneapolis*. It is one of a kind. Here is a book which deals with the nuts and bolts of the neighborhood movement, case by case. It offers an important contribution to thought and action in a vitally important and seriously neglected field.

From personal experience and observation I am familiar with community in a business, community on a construction job and community in a team of 52 volunteers charged with the administration of refugee relief in the Gaza Strip. I observed, in the different Arab cultures, the role of the small community as the seed bed of civilization, and in Western Europe I saw the historically important role of community among nations. At Antioch College and the Arthur Morgan School I witnessed the important role of community in educating for a new society.

In the matter of community in an urban setting, which is the theme of Berlowe's book, I had just one brief experience. That was in Powelton Village, a Philadelphia neighborhood in which black families had started moving in and white families were panicking. The neighborhood was headed for a slum when a group of staff members of the American Friends Service Committee, who happened to live there, brought the families together and helped develop activities, resulting in a happy and stable community.

Little known is the fact that a similar result was achieved in varying degrees in five different neighborhoods in Minneapolis. Burt Berlowe tells the detailed story of the transition of each of these neighborhoods, with names and dates and places, and the emergence of organizations, taking place over periods of years.

Each is different and distinctive. Conflicts and rivalries were sometimes involved, as were diverse business and political interests. Styles differed, as did the results, and changes kept taking place but the process went forward—and still does.

Barry Casselman, Minneapolis publisher, author and journalist says, "There is, without doubt in my mind, a great need for a book on this subject and I suspect that it has considerable potential for being widely read as a balanced and comprehensive view of inner-city grassroots activity, with an intelligent and provocative explanation of the social and political forces underlying it."

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*THE WIND BOY*, by Ethel Cook Eliot; Raven Rocks Press; 3rd edition 1996 with new illustrations by Sylvia Thomas; 237 pp soft-cover; \$14.00 (plus \$3.00 s/h) from Community Service or Raven Rocks Press, 53650 Belmont Ridge, Beallsville, OH 43716. Ohio residents add 6% tax.

by Jane Morgan

*Though THE WIND BOY will not be listed in our booklist as one of our books on community, I am reviewing it briefly because it has been out of print for many years, and is a book our family has so much enjoyed, that my son John and I decided years ago to get it before the public again..*

*THE WIND BOY* by Ethel Cook Eliot was first published 74 years ago and again in 1945. This 3rd edition, after being out of print for many years, has revived a truly uplifting and inspiring story of two refugee children, Kay and Gentian, aged nine and eight, and their artist mother who have been separated by war from their father and husband. Though not entirely accepted in their new hometown and though the children are looked upon as mischief makers, when Nan, a girl from the mountains, answers Detra's ad for household help, Kay and Gentian find a wise and guiding friend. With Nan's arrival, wonderful experiences soon unfold.

The children meet the Wind Boy, discovering they have a problem in common to help each other solve and they learn of the Clear Land first hand. As the story unfolds, we realize the depth of understanding and spiritual insight the author shows. As with *THE*

SECRET GARDEN, both children and adults can appreciate this story.

We are fortunate in having this book republished at this time when the world needs positive examples of how life may be lived. We are grateful that John Morgan so appreciated this book as a child that he has republished it for a new generation to delight in and be inspired by.

Examples of Sylvia Thomas' illustrations appear on pages 5, 9 and 12 of this newsletter.



## Readers Write

### Responses from "The Value and Future of Simple Living" Conference

Just a note to thank you again for a wonderful experience in Yellow Springs this past weekend. I have only praise for the scheduling, food, activities and accommodations and hope to return next year!

*Susan Stewart, Winter Park, FL*

Thank you for an excellent conference. I do wish I'd had more sleep previous to arrival. The "non-com-

petitive" games left me a bit unnerved! Perhaps a tad less emphasis on the conservative Quaker critique and a bit more spiritually inspired practical information on how to do without and still enjoy life. Economics of doing without manufactured materials and living on a "shoestring" would be great. Eliminating drudgery by having fun working together. Food there was great.

*E. Noble, Indianapolis, IN*

The conference was absolutely soul-renewing. When a friend asked me what I found the most impressive in it, I answered after a few seconds of thought: Scott Savage's statement about bicycles being the best invention to come out of the industrial revolution and, of course, the Morgan family. The whole thing was like a good conversation. Thanks. Blessings on all your efforts.

*Tom Martish, Evanston, IL*

Scott's formal dress seemed a bit much and the topic seemed negative; positive "how-to's" would have been more helpful. His presentation involved too much Christian talk; it got in the way of "Simple Living" theme.

We liked the small groups on Saturday morning. The diversity was interesting. We think topics for discussion on the tables and interests added to the name tags would be helpful in getting like-minded people together. We also liked the 10 minute times with each presenter.

We learned a lot from Joe Jenkins, a funny guy. We also wanted to hear the Champneys but they didn't convince us we'd learn from them. It was hard to decide. It might be better to have two session times with two or three events at each time, rather than all three at once. The games and singing could also balance this out.

We would have preferred the topic planned [discussion about how materialism and technology affect community life] on Saturday evening.

The Sunday morning evaluation session needed first positive ideas, then suggestions, then who might

help. It was a bit overwhelming. Something each person learned or was inspired by would have been more fun! Do the suggestions really help or just overwhelm?

Overall, it was inspiring [and we met] great people. We enjoyed the meals and bookstore; a map of the Glen would have been nice. Wished we could live with everyone in a community of simple living. "Tools for Simple Living" might be a future conference theme. Thanks for asking!

*Tammy & Dan Corwin-Renner, Cincinnati, OH*

Thank you for the huge effort you and the board must have mounted in order to create the fine conference on simple living which 80-90 people enjoyed last weekend! I appreciated the theme as well as the practitioners who shared their experiences with us. One must admire the Savages for living their ideals to "break the way" for the rest of us! The panels were valuable for offering more perspectives.

*Carroll English, Stelle, IL*

First, I want to thank you for inviting me to speak at the Simple Living Conference in October. I enjoyed my experience there and was glad to see so many people interested in the topic of humanure composting.

A couple of people approached me after my presentation and asked if I would be interested in doing a future presentation on another topic related to my own simple living experiences, specifically: how to make money legally, and still keep a low income for federal tax purposes. Many people who choose a simple lifestyle do so because they conscientiously object to militarism and don't want to finance the American war machine through federal income taxes. However, there are ways to be comfortable, own a home, car(s) etc. and still maintain an income below federally taxable level, primarily through self-employment. There's nothing wrong with earning money, but what's wrong is the federal government using our earnings to make more bombs or invade more countries for the benefit of big corporations. Having been self-employed for 26 years, with two businesses, and owning my own home on 17 acres

(as a family land trust), I have been able to gain some insight into this topic. In any case, if there is an interest in this at some future time I would be willing to once again visit the fair town of Yellow Springs and contribute my two cents worth.

*Joe Jenkins, Grove City, PA*

*Editor's Note: If you are interested in hearing from Joe Jenkins on this subject during next year's conference, please let us know.*

The very large attendance was heartening as I always gain so much from others as they formally and informally share their lives. As the weekend progressed, however, I became aware of the fact that many in attendance were from the Luddite Congress and I often felt like an outsider to this group. Unfortunately in each of the small groups I entered I found myself with Scott Savage. Mr. Savage dominated these discussions much to my disappointment.

Jim and I both enjoyed giving our workshop and had a lively interested group of about twelve people. Jim talked extensively with the author of THE HUMANURE HANDBOOK and was very impressed with his subject, too.

Our mutual disappointment with Saturday night's program influenced our decision not to stay over but to drive back to Cincinnati. I'm sure Mr. Savage pleased more in attendance than not but it was not as I hoped.

We had not attended the April Luddite Congress but were interested in its subject. It might have been helpful to arrange workshops so that one could attend more than one.

Meals were great as were the singing sessions and free time. Thanks for having us.

*Eileen Schenk, Cincinnati, OH*

I loved the fall conference. It was the first full one I've attended. The past several years I've only come to the Friday p.m. gathering. I liked doing the whole weekend as it gave me the opportunity to network with others. Saturday evening was not the best part

of the program but I enjoyed the silence and the participation. Since the Luddites were new to me, I enjoyed learning more about them.

Keep up your good work. I love the direction you are going. Thanks for all your hard work.

*Cindi Remm, Lebanon, OH*

### Newsletter Feedback

I'm enjoying the October-December 1996 issue, particularly the John Woolman "case example" and Pete Seeger's "final comments" which might be worth printing again.

*Howard Court, Ghent, NY*

I want to congratulate you on your continuing to focus on very important issues— you do a great job. I have many happy memories of my visit to Community Service.

*Victor Morrow, Ontario, Canada*

The article "Plain Living and High Thinking: John Woolman's Answer to Materialism," by David Shi, (October-December 1996) was my introduction to your publication. Since I live in Greenville County, SC and am a graduate of Furman University, I was fascinated by David Shi's writing. Greenville is my adopted home and I love it. I graduated from Furman University as an "older returning student." Greenville has another university, Bob Jones University, much different from Furman in philosophy and leadership.

Our local governing body decided to enact a resolution on May 21, 1996, declaring that this county, in the name of "family values," would not tolerate the presence of the gay citizens. The religious community, the Chamber of Commerce, and Mr. Shi were among those who spoke out against the resolution. Dr. Bob Jones defended the resolution as "justified in defending community standards." I am ashamed that my community chose to defend such standards.

This community is a rapidly growing Southern city luring foreign investors with tax breaks that estab-

lished businesses do not receive. Growth is rampant and largely unplanned. Problems from paving over farm land for shopping centers that go unfilled create flooding problems that go unaddressed. The council allowed the bus system to die while hotels used their vans to transport the maids to work. Their focus was making a partisan resolution that only served to divide the community. There are no fewer gays now. What was its accomplishment?

My husband decided to run for the upcoming vacant seat on County Council. He is not a politician, but he felt someone must oppose the man running unopposed who spoke in favor of this resolution. Sadly, Jack did not win the election. My hope is that it was not an affirmation of bias in such a vital, growing community.

I enjoyed your publication. I hope the next letter I write will have a promise of improved thinking in this community. Shi continues to lead the way.

*Pat Stewart, Taylors, SC*

I read each issue of the newsletter usually the same day I receive it. Good stuff! Thanks for all of your hard work during the past year in support of community.

*John J. Browne, Boulder, CO*

## Announcements

### Funding Available

The Center for Farm & Food Research, Inc., a tax-exempt private agency, is developing a coalition of groups, organizations and individuals working in the areas of sustainable agriculture, food, land or environmental issues who wish to locate funding for specific projects, but need and do not have tax-exempt status required by most private foundations and government funding agencies.

The Center can provide the 501(c)(3) coverage as well as expertise in researching, writing and editing project proposals. To receive a copy of the criteria for using this service and for further information

write: Dr. Lucille Salitan, CFFR, Old Queechy Farm, Box 93, Canaan, NY 12029 or phone: 518/781-4174.

### Two Job Openings at IMAGO

Office Manager/Secretary, a full-time position, requires skills in typing, ordering, record keeping; some knowledge of computer and bookkeeping. \$12,500/yr.

Director/Coordinator for IMAGO's Outdoor Earth Center, part-time position. The Earth Center helps school children and others to ground their learning in an outdoor setting. Requires a deep love for the Earth, ability to develop programming to market the program, recruit and train teachers and assist in fund raising. \$10/hr, 20 to 30 hrs/wk.

Danielle Gugler: "I want to provide a recommendation for anyone interested in working at this wonderful place! My experience as Office Manager of IMAGO has been very positive. Though the daily tasks of management in an office have the potential for becoming "routine", this has never been the case here. Besides enjoying the satisfaction of being an organizer, I have appreciated working in an atmosphere that encourages creativity and ingenuity. It also provides space for reflection alongside the daily tasks. I highly recommend this position for someone interested in a challenging and fulfilling job."

### Kimberton Hills Future Events

Kimberton Hills, an intentional village in Kimberton, PA, will be hosting the Annual Earth Day Expo April 26<sup>th</sup>. On May 3<sup>rd</sup> the Annual May Fair will take place at the Camphill Special School in Beaver Run, Glenmoore, PA. For more information contact Kimberton Hills, P.O. Box 155, Kimberton, PA 19442, or call 610/935-0300.

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### Membership

Membership is a means of supporting and sharing in 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 and smaller ones gladly accepted. Contributions of \$12 cover the newsletter only. All contributions are 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. For specific issues, send \$1 per copy.

### Editors' Notes

We welcome letters to the editor (under 300 words) and articles (700-2000 words) about notable communities or people who are improving the quality of life in their communities. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you wish the article returned. The only compensation we can offer is a year's subscription to our newsletter, 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 any corrections to us. It increases our cost greatly if the Post Office notifies us of moves, and you will not receive your newsletter promptly.

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