

WORKSHOP PAPERS

for

Community & Regionalism

Workshop Leader – Kirkpatrick Sale

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The Future of The English by J.B. Priestley

To write about the English in standard and cosmopolitan political terms, the usual Left-Centre-Right stuff, is almost always wasting time and trouble. The English are different. The English are even more different than they *think* they are, though not more different than they feel they are. And what they feel — Englishness again - is more important than what they think. It is instinctive feeling and not rational thought that shapes and colours actual events in England.

For example, although the English seem to be so sharply divided, always indulging in plenty of loud political abuse, there are nothing like so many Communists or neo- or potential Fascists in England as there are in most other countries.

Again, although the English seem to have more than their share of rallies, protest marches, confrontations with authority, what could begin to look like a murderous encounter in France or America, or might be a bloody street battle in Japan, would in England end at the worst in a few scuffles and arrests.

This is because there are fewer fanatical believers among the English, and at the same time, below the noisy arguments, the abuse and the quarrels, there is a reservoir of instinctive fellow-feeling, not yet exhausted though it may not be filling up. Not everybody can draw on that reservoir. No doubt there are in England some snarling shop stewards who demand freedom for the workers when what they really want is to bring the whole system crashing down, together with every guarantee of liberty. No doubt there are wealthy employers who smile at the TV cameras and declare that all they desire is the friendliest relation with their work force, when at heart they would like to take a whip to the whole idle troublesome mob of them. But there are not many of these men, either on the board or the shop floor, and they are certainly not typical English. Some cancer in their character has eaten away their Englishness.

The real English, who are 'different', who have inherited Englishness and have not yet thrown away their inheritance, cannot feel at home in the contemporary world, representing the accelerated development of our whole age. It demands bigness, and they are suspicious of bigness. (And there is now not only Industrial bigness; there is also Scientific bigness, needing more and more to discover less and less.)

Clearly everything cannot be done by smallish and reasonably human enterprises. No cosy shipyard can undertake to build a 150,000-ton ship, though we may not be in our right minds if we want such a ship. But it is safe to say that while Englishness may reluctantly accept bigness, its monsters are never heartily welcomed. They look all right in America, itself so large, but seem altogether out of scale in England.

Along with the demand for bigness goes a demand for severe efficiency, often quite rational but not reasonable, therefore alien to Englishness. A further necessary demand, to feed the monster with higher and higher figures and larger and larger profits, is for enormous advertising campaigns and brigades of razor-keen salesmen. Finally, from the monster and all its spokesmen comes a message, endlessly repeated. It runs more or less as follows: 'You ought to be happy. But you are not happy. You can be happy, though, if you buy what we are making for you.' And a postscript might be added from Iago: 'Put money in thy purse.'

I like to call this '*Admass*', and will do so from now on. I will also announce what the future of the English hangs upon, while at the same time, unlike almost everybody else, keeping well clear of economics. It hangs upon the final result of a battle that has been going on for some years now and that explains why the English seem so odd, eccentric, unsatisfactory, not only abroad but to many persons at home.

It is a battle that is being fought in the minds of the English. It is between '*Admass*', which has already conquered most of the Western world, and '*Englishness*', ailing and impoverished, in no position to receive vast subsidies of dollars, francs, deutschmarks and the rest, for public relations and advertising campaigns.

The triumphs of '*Admass*' can be plainly seen. It operates in the outer visible world, where it offers more and more things - for more and more money of course - and creates the so-called 'Good Life'.

Against this, at least superficially, '*Englishness*' seems a poor shadowy show - a faint pencil sketch beside a poster in full colour - belonging as it really does to the invisible inner world, merely offering states of mind in place of that rich variety of things. But then while things are important, states of mind are even more important.

It is easy to understand why there should be this conflict between 'Admass' and 'Englishness'. What is central to 'Admass' is the production and consumption of goods. If there is enough of this - though of course there never is, because dissatisfaction is built into 'Admass' - there will be sufficient money to pay for its 'Good Life'.

But it is worth noting along the way that while America has been for many years the chief advocate of 'Admass', America has shown us too many desperately worried executives dropping into early graves, too many exhausted salesmen taking refuge in bars and breaking up their homes, too many workmen suffering from monotony or time-and-motion studies and wondering how the hell they got into these traps. And America, to its credit, can also show us a lot of sensible men and women who have denounced all this and have walked out of it.

But this book is about the English, not the Americans. Now 'Englishness', with its relation to the unconscious, its dependence upon instinct and intuition, cannot break its links with the past: it has deep long roots. Being itself a state of mind, it cannot ignore other states of mind and cannot help feeling that 'Admass', with its ruthless competitiveness, its idea of man simply as a producer and consumer, its dependence upon dissatisfaction, greed and envy, must be responsible for bad and not good states of mind.

Furthermore, while 'Englishness' is not hostile to change, it is deeply suspicious of change for change's sake, rejecting the idea that we are now committed to some inevitable mechanical progress. Here we might take a concrete example.

'Englishness' would support an immediate demand, at the expense of many other things, for more and better housing. Without adequate shelter and a decent place to call their own, people feel wretched. But people in England, not a big country, do not have to have more and more and larger and larger cars, with longer and wider motorways, wrecking the countryside, to take the cars.

If they think they do, this is 'Admass' at work. People have wanted houses for centuries, and cars of their own only for a very short time. To put cars and motorways before houses seems to 'Englishness' a communal imbecility.

The battle that will decide the future of the English is going on all round us. At this time of writing, we in England are in the middle of it. I must add that while 'Englishness' can still fight on, 'Admass' could be winning.

There are various reasons why this may be happening. To begin with, not all the English hold fast to 'Englishness'. Some important and influential men carefully train themselves out of it - politicians, academics, bureaucrats, ambitious financiers and industrialists, can be found among these men - and a horde of others, shallow and foolish, wander away from it, shrugging off their inheritance.

'Englishness' is not as strong as it was even thirty years ago. It needs to be nourished by a sense of the dignity and possible destiny of mankind. It must have some moral capital to draw upon, and soon it may be asking for an overdraft.

The *Zeitgeist* seems to be working for 'Admass'. So does most of what we read and what we hear. Even our inflation, which keeps everybody nudging everybody for more money, is often seen not as a warning, not as an enemy of the genuine good life, but as a proof that we need more and not less 'Admass'.

Some battles have been won or lost because the commander of a large force, arriving late, decided almost at the last moment to change sides. I feel that a powerful section of English workers, together with their union bosses, is in the same situation as that commander just before he could make up his mind. These men believe that if there is a 'Good Life' going, then it's high time they had their share of it.

But some remaining 'Englishness' in them whispers that there may be a catch in it. Where's this 'Good Life' in sweating your guts out, just because the managers are on the productivity-per-man-hour caper? It's all a racket anyhow. If we don't work like the old man used to do, we're not turning out the honest stuff the old man was expected to turn out. It's the profit now, not the product. Half the time, we cheat the foremen, the foremen cheat the management, the management cheats the customers. Okay, we want shorter hours, more holidays, bigger pay packets - then the 'Good Life' of the adverts for us. Or are we kidding ourselves?

Now I am not pretending that something like this is being said in every branch of English industry, and certainly not where there is a genuine - if rather old-fashioned - pride in the work on hand. But something like it is being said, thought or felt, in the very places where there is the most money, the most boredom, the most trouble and 'industrial action', and indeed the most *'Admass'*.

Behind the constant bickering, the sudden walk-outs and strikes, the 'bloody-mindedness', which bewilders so many foreign commentators, is the conflict between *'Admass'*, offering so much, and the *'Englishness'* that instinctively recoils from *'Admassian'* values and life-style. There are, of course, people on the management side who may be aware of this conflict in themselves, but it is probably nothing like so sharp, the *'Admass'* spoils being greater for them and their instinctive feeling not being so strong. The common people have clung harder to tradition than any other class.

In addition to this conflict, all the more worrying because it is hardly ever openly discussed, there is something else that must disturb many officials and members of the more powerful trade unions. This is the anomalous position of these huge organizations. What exactly are they?

One day they describe themselves as existing simply to negotiate rates of pay, hours and conditions of work. Another day they talk and behave as if the country was moving towards syndicalism and they were in the van. A week later they will be back in their purely negotiating role. They make the rest of us feel that either they should be more important and if possible creative, or less important, just minding their own business.

As it is they are like a hippopotamus blundering in and out of a pets' tea party. Moreover, sooner or later they will have to put an end to this conflict between *'Admass'* and what remains of their *'Englishness'*, coming down decisively on one side or the other, for *they cannot enjoy both together*. The future of the English may be shaped by this decision.

There are, of course, people belonging to all classes who do not want to be fascinated and then enslaved by *'Admass'*, and who if necessary are ready to make a few sacrifices, largely material, to achieve a satisfying state of mind. They probably believe, as I do, that the *'Admass Good Life'* is a fraud on all counts. Even the stuff it produces is mostly junk, meant to be replaced as soon as you can afford to keep on buying.

Such people can be found among workers in smallish, well-managed and honest enterprises, in which everybody still cares about the product and does not assume the customers are idiots. They can be found, too - though not in large numbers because the breed is dying out - among crusty High Tories who avoid the City and directors' fees.

But they are strongest and, I fancy, on the increase in the professional classes, men and women who may or may not believe in my *'Englishness'* but have rejected *'Admass'*. They are usually articulate; they have many acquaintances, inside or outside their professions, ready to listen to them; and not a few of them have a chance to talk on TV and radio. If the battle can be won, it will probably be these men and women who will swing it.

But what about the young?

Here we might remember that as soon as we consider even the fairly immediate future then our young will not be the young any more; some other young will have arrived. It is one difficulty the American counter-culture enthusiasts have to face - that while they are still praising the rebellious young, half those lads and girls may have already lost their youth and may be as busy conforming to Madison Avenue as they conformed earlier to Hippy California or the road to Katmandu.

So far as the English young are concerned, I am dubious about the noisy types, whether they are shouting in the streets or joining the vast herds at pop festivals. Too many of them lack the individuality to stand up to *'Admass'*, which can provide them with another and even larger herd to join. I have far more faith in the quieter young, who never swaggered around in the youth racket, who may have come under the influence of one or two of those professional men and women, who have probably given some thought to what life may be like at forty or forty-five. They, too, might help to swing the battle.

What follows does not apply to old-age pensioners, to people still overworked and underpaid, to all the English who have some integrity, some individual judgment and real values. Far too many of the other English - though I don't say a majority - are sloppy people. They are easy to get along with, rarely unkind, but they are not dependable; they are inept, shiftless, slovenly, messy.

This is not entirely their own fault. Unlike their fathers or grandfathers, they have not been disciplined by grim circumstances. They are no longer facing starvation if they don't work properly or go on strike, no longer told to clear out if they aren't properly respectful and start answering back, no longer find themselves the victims of too many hard facts. And this, in my opinion, is how things should be in a civilized society.

But people who have been liberated from the harsh discipline of circumstance should then move on to acquire some measure of self-discipline. Without self-discipline a man cannot play an adequate part in a civilized society: he will be just slopping around, accepting no responsibility, skimping the work he is supposed to be doing, cheating not only 'the bosses', the capitalists, but even his neighbours. And unless he is an unusual type, he will not even find much satisfaction in this scrounging messy existence, which does nothing for a man's self-respect. (I am keeping this on the male side, if only because a woman's problems are generally more personal, immediate, emotionally urgent, so that unless she is a hopeless case she has to face and deal with some of them.)

And this is the situation that many of the English, decent at heart, find themselves in today. Bewildered, they grope and mess around because they have fallen between two stools, the old harsh discipline having vanished and the essential new self-discipline either not understood or thought to be out of reach.

Boredom is a menace, now and in the future. All heavily industrialized societies are in the boredom business. This is not simply because so much of the work they offer is boring. It is also because, after having shattered the slow rhythms, the traditional skills, the closely knit communities of rural societies, they crowd people together, excite them by large promises that cannot be kept, so drive them into boredom.

Now the English - at least the contemporary English of my experience - can soon feel bored, which largely explains why they gamble and booze so much and enjoy any dramatic change in public life, any news that encourages excited talk: the urban English have always seemed to me a *dramatic* people. When boredom can't be banished, there is always danger ahead. Teenagers, 'who have not been able to use up enough energy during the day (they should be worked harder), turn at night to idiot vandalism. Later, if boredom hardens into frustration, some of them, too many of them, take to crime, all kinds, from petty shop-lifting to ferocious robbery with violence.

Life in fact was much rougher, harder, more superficially insecure, when I was young, but there seemed to be more honesty about, less constant cheating and pilfering and certainly far less vicious criminality. Other elements apart from boredom of course have been at work here. There is Iago's 'Put money in thy purse'; there is the false notion that the world owes you something while you owe it nothing; the other idea that so long as you are not found out, then all will be well - no final damnation threatening you any longer, and no understanding yet that there can be plenty of Hells on a do-it-yourself basis.

Behind it all, whether people are sunk into almost mindless apathy or scream out of their frustration for violence, there is a feeling that everything is different now, that life has been 'found out' to be without meaning, without purpose, equally negative for all mankind or for your own nation. Naturally I am not saying all the English are down on this level. We still have some '*Englishness*' left, keeping our minds open to the past and retaining some faith in our future, rejecting the logic-chopping rational for the widely if hazily reasonable, refusing to be cut off from instinct and intuition.

Yes, '*Englishness*' is still with us. But it needs reinforcement, extra nourishment, especially now when our public life seems ready to starve it. There are English people of all ages, though far more under thirty than over sixty, who seem to regard politics as a game but not one of their games - polo, let us say. To them the '*House of Commons*' is a remote squabbling-shop. Recognized political parties are repertory companies staging ghostly campaigns, and all that is real between them is the arrangement by which one set of chaps take their turn at ministerial jobs while the other set pretend to be astounded and shocked and bring in talk of ruin.

The whole thing, in the eyes of these people, is an expensive and tedious farce. In my view they are mistaken, indeed quite dangerously wrong, and I can only hope that no young demagogue of genius and his friends are listening to them. Otherwise they could soon learn, in the worst way, that heavy hands can fall on the shoulders that have been shrugging away politics.

You can ignore politics, taking what has been gained for granted, only to discover your cousins have vanished and you are being knocked up at three in the morning. Dictatorships have thrived on majorities that are apathetic and then frightened, and on minorities that are fanatically divided, brutally quarrelsome and stupid.

At this time of writing (1973) both the cynical or frivolous majority, which imagines itself to be outside politics, and the stubbornly divided minority, only agreeing in being myopic and entirely self-interested, exist in England.

But I believe there must also still exist, if only on a hidden level, what remains of a characteristically English sense of community, decent fellow-feeling, fairness. (*'It isn't fair'*, children still cry.) In spite of the *'Admass'* atmosphere, inflation, the all-round grab, all this must yet exist even now, for there are deep roots here. But those roots must be needing nourishment.

'Englishness' cannot be fed with the east wind of a narrow rationality, the latest figures of profit and loss, a constant appeal to self-interest. Politicians are always making such appeals, whereas statesmen, when they can be found, prefer to take themselves and their hearers out of the stock exchanges, shareholders' meetings, counting-houses. They offer men the chance of behaving better and not as usual. They create an atmosphere in which the familiar greed and envy and resentment begin to seem small and contemptible. They restore to people their idea of themselves as a family. It has been done in England over and over again. But not lately.

There has been little or no appeal from deep feeling to deep feeling, from imagination to imagination. Recent years have 'robbed us of immortal things'. But we do not have to go on like that, to enter a *'Common Market of national character'*.

It is now many years since I first declared in public my belief that the English, despite so many appearances to the contrary, are at heart and at root an imaginative people immediately responsive to any suggestion of drama in their lives. Deprived of it, they drift towards boredom, sulks and foolish short-sighted quarrels. And this is true, whether they are wearing bowler hats or ungovernable mops of hair.

To face the future properly they need both a direction and a great lift of the heart. A rather poorer and harder way of life will not defeat them so long as it is not harder and poorer in spirit, so long as it still refuses to reject *'Englishness'* - for so many centuries the secret of the islanders' oddity and irrationality, their many weaknesses, their creative strength.

The Final Chapter from 'The English' published by William Heinemann in 1973

The New Ecology Movement by Kirkpatrick Sale

The author, who lives in New York, has written one of the most important books in alternative movement literature - 'The Human Scale', and has recently published a new work on bioregionalism entitled 'Dwellers in the Land', obtainable from Schumacher Book Service, Ford House, Hartland, Devon.

There are a number of tree species in which the outlying trees of any grove or forest act as a kind of early warning system for all the rest, able to detect the presence of dangerous organisms from the outside, and, by chemical signals, warn the other trees in the area of the threat and stimulate them to produce the enzymes that will protect them from the invading organisms.

I believe that the human species is similarly equipped, and there are a number of individuals among us who act as a kind of early warning system, able to detect in a most *sensitive* way the signs of imminent danger, although in our case, such is the accumulated power of our species, those signs more often come from *within* rather than from without. These are the people who have for a long time been warning about the dangers both to the species itself and the world it inhabits, of its reckless embrace of science, technology, and the industrial monoculture - people like Blake, Jefferson, Thoreau, Kropotkin, Muir, Mumford, Dubos, Illich and Schumacher.

In the last ten years there have come forth a whole new set of early-warners, more numerous and more varied and more vociferous than ever before - because the dangers, to the human species and the very ecosphere on which it depends, are more numerous and more widespread and more serious than ever before.

I am talking about what is called the '*New Ecology*' movement, and its most coherent and developed systematic face, known as bioregionalism. It has taken a number of forms as it has arisen during the last decade - Deep Ecology; Green Politics; steady state economics; social ecology; the Regeneration Project; Earth First; the American Indian Movement - and I think that it will continue to take a variety of shapes.

It is a protean thing, a response to an industrial system that seems to be in the beginning of its death throes that is flailing about all over the globe causing profound devastations as it romps and twitches. But the most widespread form, with the most adherents, the most worked-through analyses, the best energies, is that of bioregionalism.

The early warning that bioregionalism is spreading through society, put bluntly, is this:

- Industrial civilisation has either reached or can now perceive its limits, for, like any organism, its life is finite and when it has used up all its available resources by indigestion and when it has poisoned all its residual environment by excretion, it must come to an end.
- Like no other system before it, industrial civilisation has significantly altered the species and the natural systems of the world to the point that it has put the globe on the brink of ecocide: the death not only of humanity but of the biosphere on which all life depends.
- Like no other system before, it has satisfied material conditions for a sizeable minority of people, mostly white, mostly Western, but it has done so at a price of terrible spiritual misery, social disruption, political disenfranchisement, military violence, racial genocide, individual alienation and natural degradation.
- There are no palliatives, no half steps, no reforms that will save us from the impending disaster. We must instead eradicate the disease, the disease of industrial society itself. If the human species is to survive, it had best get about the business of figuring some way to move to an alternative system, guided by the knowledge that this industrial arrangement of humanity is no more than 500 years old, a tiny pinprick on the long stretch of time and that other, more benign arrangements are possible - and necessary.

That is the warning, and a serious one it is. But there is more to bioregionalism than that - there is the bioregional vision, the vision of an ecologically based society, living in accordance with the principles of nature, patterning its human systems so as to live in balance with natural systems, in a world that is understood to be biocentric rather than anthropocentric.

That vision is of a new way of life, a new paradigm, a new kind of civilisation, one that, to put it in shorthand, is based on:

Bioregional Paradigm	Industrio-Scientific Paradigm
Scale	
Region	State
Community.	Nation/World
Economy	
Conservation	Exploitation
Stability	Change/Progress
Self-sufficiency	World Economy
Cooperation	Competition
Polity	
Decentralisation	Centralisation
Complementarity	Hierarchy
Diversity	Uniformity
Society	
Symbiosis	Polarisation
Evolution	Growth/Violence
Division/Diversity	Monoculture/Uniformity

The bioregional vision is rooted in the human scale, the limited, coherent, nature-based region in which we can take our place within the natural systems of the living earth and the natural interplay of species that inhabit there.

For bioregionalists, the lines drawn on maps by humans are, to all intents and purposes, irrelevant, for they have nothing to do with the realities of nature, and tend to *lump* natural systems or *divide* them quite arbitrarily according to petty human dictates, not the patterns of the actual surface of the earth.

For bioregionalists, the *natural* patterns of the earth are taken as the natural way to pattern human settlements and activities - and these are the *bioregions*, regions defined according to their life; the flora and fauna, the living systems of rocks and water and climate, and the human constructs these have given rise to.

We can begin to see things ecologically, and understand our place in nature, *only* in limited and finite and immediate surroundings, at the scale of the bioregion - not the scale of the whole planet, for example, because that is too vast for our imaginations, and people who think in global terms actually distance themselves from the reality under their feet; nor the scale of the single factory or the single village, because that isolates us from our surroundings, from the connections nature is making between and among species and their support systems all around.

The bioregional scale is the human scale, the scale at which we can properly locate our activities and see their consequences and appreciate their effects. It is also the scale at which we can develop institutions, political and economic, of limited size to replace the giant megagovernments and multinational corporations that now impose themselves on our lives. It is the scale at which we find a psychological home, can begin to understand, as the early peoples understood, what it is like to set roots, to know a place, to have a home in the earth.

For me there are three consequences of my being awakened to the bioregional vision. The first is the development of an ecological philosophy, testing everything that comes along according to its underlying ecological value and truth, and thus building up, so to speak, the bioregional muscles within you.

The second part of the bioregional process, for me at least, is spreading the vision to others - not so much teaching, for teaching is basically hierarchical and paternalistic - as opening people to the new insights, holding out the vision.

And the third part of the process, one that I suggest should properly follow a little down the way, is starting to take some actions that promote the bioregional idea and challenge the industrial super-structure. Each person can best decide what sorts of actions are most congenial, but obviously the range of them is nearly infinite and there are an awful lot to choose from.

What Price Commune Living by Helen Prescott

The author is the editor of 'Creative Mind', an alternative journal based on Liverpool. This article first appeared in Fourth World Review Number 13 in 1986.

A huge aging stone building built in 1609, now the 'Centre de Chadenac' which apparently was a former farmhouse, provided the venue for the week. The place was not a commune but a meeting place, with large dormitories plus an outside swimming pool, all of which served the needs of the area.

The event began with a slow start as some 70 people turned up. Although most people were from France and the 'Collectif Reseau Alternatif' (CRA) network, a number of representatives from other countries arrived. However, I soon realised that I was not about to sort out my life via communal living.

In terms of the numbers and the hospitality extended, the event was successful. An endless supply of free wine that flowed day and night was welcomed by most. And mid-way through the week, the number of French visitors appeared to have multiplied many-fold!

Discussion groups were formed by splitting up into four sections; external relations, internal relations, finance and alternative technologies, with the latter group being somewhat under-subscribed. One was expected to stay with one's group for the festival's duration and many people did because there was nothing else programmed.

My group spent the entire first day discussing the process by which they would have the meetings rather than the situation in hand. The external relations group spent most of the week discussing internal relations instead. Often meetings had little structure and sometimes when a structure was imposed it was shot down in flames, with people arguing and shouting very aggressively.

What did I glean from all this about the alternative scene in Europe?

Well, maybe many of my ideas had been worked out before but the occasion was depressing rather than celebratory for me. Most of the problems of society unfolded before me in the guise of the communes movement. As a survivor of the Toxteth riots, I feel you are safer in Handsworth, Brixton or Toxteth than on the average commune! And just why should a person think that...

Two participators related their bad experience of a short stay at a 'new age' commune in Paris which operated one of the famous spiritual hierarchies. People there were exploited. The situation was like normal society except that when one worked all day and night one received no pay for it! Seemingly some communes expect people to endure endless hardship by an 'all work no pay' policy. Maybe this is another challenge in life; it is not my idea of one. It is incredible but many groups like this do exist.

Exploitation is one of the main sources of worry regarding one's involvement with communal living. If this is the glorious new age, it is certainly of little use to many of us. In Britain, the so-called 'straight society' would prevent such a situation by intervening with trade unions and maybe even take strike action to prevent worker exploitation. In the alternative society, you have no redress to anyone.

Being a veteran of previous festivals, this final saga for me was not refreshing. A first-time visitor could have experienced the event in a more positive way; the occasion was intimidating and the series of bad events that befell me there only worsened matters. All the organising was done by men, all the groups were led by men and all discussions were dominated by men. What more can one say? A distinct air of chauvinism hung over the proceedings.

As it seemed impossible to take a real critical line on communes, the festival, at least, whilst I was there, remained as no more than propaganda exercise on group living. It was self-affirming and self-congratulatory; slides and videos were presented by those privileged and fortunate enough to be living in the lavish surroundings of communal housing.

Seemingly, the fact of being in a group confers a certain status that you would not have as a lonesome individual or isolated family. What exactly is isolated about a typical nuclear family these days? It begs the question of just who are YOU. Problems often multiply with group living rather than lessen. True, you can share out the responsibilities and difficulties but you have dozens more problems to share out anyway.

If small is beautiful, why is everyone in this movement trying to live in massive houses, with enormous kitchens, 300 lb cabbages and 5 weeks of laundry piling up on the floor? I think it's time we knew.

Rather than representing the simple life, communes often reflect grand scale alternativism.

Communes are frequently hotbeds for idealism and little else. How can you change the world with communal groups when they are so overtly white, male-dominated, middle class, imperialist and subscribing to an elitist life-style beyond the reach of most people? After more than 10 years of active participation in the alternative movement in Britain, all I feel that I am left with is a major lesion in my right hemisphere!

Many communes are highly impersonal structures with a shortfall in privacy and intimacy. A large proportion of groups exist in former institutions, which often were redundant buildings that nobody wanted, on offer at knock down prices. The character of the people often takes on the character of the building, which is sometimes large and unfriendly.

The difference between a huge commune and a small nuclear family can often be like the difference between a city and a village.

Other communes do offer more than just a few strong key people with dominion over a small ineffectual group. Some of course are exclusive, regardless of what they actually say. The reality is in the practice not the theory.

It must be pointed out that the communes at the festival were not representative of their countries' commune movement as a whole.

In Britain, for example, although '*Laurieston Hall*' is one of the oldest and most widely known of the '*New Era*' communes, it is unlike many other places. British communes are thin on the ground, with many having problems of varying intensity such as low numbers or debts.

The commune is one of the most radical ways of bringing social change and as an idea it is par excellent. However, human nature being what it is and not being as flexible as are the actual ideas about it, the communes movement will no doubt encounter many fluctuations and hostilities before it develops and is reborn as a realistic alternative.

Such human failings as power, greed, caprice and selfishness are even more prevalent in the 'me' generation of our times and all too prominent in many aspects of society, including communes.

Although many people within the movement are happy with their lot, some are seeking change; others have left in a disillusioned state whilst a few outsiders cannot even begin to contemplate the possibility of this kind of lifestyle.

The festival itself: intense, disturbing and chaotic in parts, enjoyable at other times. First the plethora of chaos. CRA, '*Collectif Reseau Alternatif*', provided the bulk of the organising and the participators. For those not familiar with the '*CRA*', they are a network of about 25 groups mainly in Southern France. CRA are no ordinary network and much can be said to their credit. The groups are a home to many young people with mental problems. They were partly founded on the ideas of anti-psychiatrist David Cooper and offer help for disturbed people as an alternative to standard treatments and institutions.

The disturbed members needed constant attention during the event. One girl had three epileptic fits a day and was covered in bruises. Others would be violently sick as they made the most of the free wine. One evening, a dreadful fight broke out which one of the organisers broke up. Sitting down to breakfast the next morning, in a blood splattered shirt, he spoke with anger of how nobody would assist him in stopping the fight. One young man walked around nude all day whilst others danced on the table at meal times, but most ran about screaming, intent on disrupting everything that did not have them as the centre of all the attention.

The state pays approximately £20 per person per day for a stay up to a maximum of two years at one of the communes. Although '*CRA*' may have political motives for their work and are clearly anarchists, the financial incentive is immense. As the youngsters are able to do whatever they want, whenever they want and take whatever they want, discipline is non-existent.

Hence at the festival five people had personal property stolen. On the third day £35 of mine was whisked away after my bags had been thoroughly searched and my pockets turned out. I have travelled extensively throughout Europe, including overland treks to Turkey and Morocco, yet the only time I had money stolen was at an 'alternative' festival. This was certainly alternative, theft was the last thing I had expected! Nobody's belongings were safe as hoards of unknowns drifted in and out of open dormitories rifling through bags.

The situation was too precarious and I did not want to be in a position of having to walk back to Liverpool, so I left.

Turning Towards Localization by Edward Goldsmith

There are no cosmetic solutions to the problems that confront us. They are the inevitable consequences of economic growth or development and in particular its globalization, which is the logical extension of this process to the world as a whole.

Its main feature is that it involves the systematic takeover, partly by the state but increasingly by ever-more powerful corporations, of all those functions that throughout our tenancy of this planet have been fulfilled at a family and community level.

The author tries to show that it is unfortunately only at these levels, that is, within the context of the 'social economy': that these functions can be effectively fulfilled. This, particularly, is true of democratic government and this is one of the main reasons why the economy must be localized: for only in this way can it provide the necessary economic infrastructure for the resurgence of healthy families and communities. For the author, there is no other means of recreating a just and sustainable world, or even of assuring human survival on an increasingly beleaguered planet.

The development of the global economy, which has been institutionalized with the signing of the 'GATT Uruguay Round' and the setting up of the 'WTO' will, we were assured, usher in an era of unprecedented prosperity for all. However, as the contributors to this book have sought to show, this assertion is based on no serious considerations of any kind. On the contrary, it can only lead for most of humanity to an unprecedented increase in general insecurity, unemployment, poverty, disease, malnutrition and environmental disruption.

It is difficult for those who have had a modern education to understand why this must be so. We have all been taught that economic development, measured by an ever-increasing GNP, is the key to world prosperity and human well-being. Hence, all possible efforts must be made to maximize GNP, which means investing as much as possible in scientific and technological innovation, and making sure that the whole development enterprise is managed by ever larger and more 'efficient' corporations that cater for an ever bigger and 'freer' market.

However, this is precisely what we have been doing in the last 50 years, during which time development has been the overriding goal of governments throughout the world. Trillions of dollars have already been poured into development schemes by multinational development banks, bilateral aid agencies and private enterprises. Revolutionary new technologies have transformed agriculture, industry and services alike. Tariffs have been drastically reduced, and small companies, catering for the domestic economy, have been systematically replaced by vast transnational corporations catering for an ever-expanding world market.

World GNP, as a result, has increased by sixfold and world trade by twelvefold. If conventional wisdom were right, then the world should have been transformed into a veritable paradise. Poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, homelessness, disease and environmental disruption should be but vague memories of our barbaric and underdeveloped past. Needless to say, the opposite is true. Never have these problems become more serious and more widespread.

By setting up the 'WTO', of course, governments are further accelerating the process of global economic development by removing all conceivable constraints on trade, and indeed on just about all the activities of the TNCs that control it, regardless of social, ecological and moral implications. In other words, instead of accepting the incontrovertible empirical evidence that this policy can only increase the problems we face today, governments, under pressure from the transnational corporations, insist in pursuing it still further.

If we are really to solve these problems, as in their hearts, most people must clearly realize, society must follow the very opposite path. Instead of seeking to create a single global economy, controlled by vast and ever less controllable transnational corporations, we should create a diversity of loosely linked, community-based economies, managed by much smaller companies that cater above all (though clearly not exclusively) for local or regional markets. In other words, it is not economic globalization that we should aim for but economic localization.

In saying this, I am, in effect, calling for a reversal of economic globalization and indeed of the very process of economic development, of which globalization is but the logical conclusion. But this does not mean reconstituting the past. We have been indelibly marked by the experience of the industrial era, and the local economies that we will seek to create cannot be slavish imitations of those that previously existed. However, since, until recently, economies have always been largely localized, their experience must clearly be seriously considered.

To understand why economic development, leading as it must eventually do to economic globalization, must be reversed, means looking very much more carefully at what it really involves and what are its inevitable implications.

For perhaps as much as 95 per cent of our tenancy of this planet, all those functions that today are fulfilled by the state and the corporations were once fulfilled by the family, or perhaps more precisely by the household and the community. The household produced most of its food, though the more demanding tasks involved cooperation between households and sometimes by the community as a whole. The household made most of its own clothes and other artefacts, and acquired those that it did not make itself from within the community. It brought up the young and looked after the old and the sick. The community administered justice, maintained social order and ensured that the traditional religious ceremonies were properly performed. It was thus largely self-sufficient and, indeed, self-governing.

Jeremy Rifkin refers to Labour historian Harry Braverman, who tells us that in the US as late as 1890, even those families living in highly industrialized regions, such as the coal and steel communities of Pennsylvania, were still producing virtually all of their food at home - over half the families raised their own poultry, livestock and vegetables, purchasing only potatoes at the market.

Of course, communities in New England were originally self-governing as well, as is amply testified by Alexis de Tocqueville in his *'Democracy in America'*; in parts of eastern France and in Switzerland, communities to a large extent still are self-governing today (*Layton, 1995*).

David Korten refers to the largely non-monetized economy of the household and the community as 'the social economy'. For him, 'social economies are by nature local, non-waged, non-monetized and non-market. Therefore, they are not counted in national income statistics, do not contribute to measured economic growth and are undervalued by policy-makers, who count only activities in the market economy as productive contributions to national output.' But their function was more important than this. As Korten says, 'the very conduct of these activities serves to maintain the social bonds of trust and obligation, the 'social capital' of the community' (*Korten, 1994*).

Korten also notes that 'a considerable proportion of economic growth in recent decades is simply a result of shifting functions from the social economy, where they are not counted in GNP, to the market economy, where they are'. He might have added that this is what economic growth or development is all about. Thus, as it proceeds, food and clothes now have to be bought, the young are brought up in creches, schools and universities, and which under the new regulations of the 'GATTS' are now to be privatized; the old and the sick are looked after in special homes and hospitals which are also now to be privatized; and so on.

In this way, all these and other critical functions are disembedded from their natural social context, commodified and increasingly privatized, and hence ever less available to the poor and the needy. In addition, in such conditions, the family and the community stripped of their natural functions, can only atrophy and we get an atomized society made up of socially deprived and increasingly alienated people whose only remaining functions are to produce and consume.

If, until very recently, human families and communities were quite capable of looking after themselves without the intervention of any outside agencies, such as state institutions and corporations, so were the highly diverse ecosystems that make up the natural world, and it is largely on the inestimable benefits provided by their normal functioning, and on those of the natural world as a whole, that human life and indeed the lives of all other living things have always depended.

As development proceeds, however, these critical functions are also taken over by the state and the corporations. Thus, the nitrogen used to fertilize our land is increasingly produced at great cost in factories rather than fixed by nitrogen-fixing bacteria on the roots of leguminous plants; and the water we use, instead of being stored for free in the aquifers beneath the forest floor, is increasingly stored in large, man-made reservoirs.

It is now even proposed by economists (and tame scientists concur) that, rather than cut down on emissions of greenhouse gases which are now on such a scale that the stability of world climate is overwhelmingly threatened, the Earth's natural functions should be undertaken by vast geo-engineering schemes. Foremost among these schemes is a plan to site 50,000 one hundred square kilometre mirrors in space in order to reflect away the heat of the sun and keep the planet cool.

In other words, economic development is therefore not only the systematic shift to the formal monetized economy of the functions that were previously fulfilled for free by 'the social economy', but also a shift away from 'the great economy', as Wendell Berry refers to the economy of the natural world as a whole.

The consequences of such an enterprise are, of course, dramatic. It can only cause the demise of the social economy as the household and the community - its basic building blocks - are condemned to atrophy from want of use. It also signals the demise of the 'great economy', which must become ever less capable of fulfilling its natural functions, which, as I shall argue, they alone are capable of fulfilling effectively and sustainably.

This is the first paper in a three-part series of papers originally published as 'The Last Word' in 'The Case Against The Global Economy & For a Turn towards Localization' edited by Edward Goldsmith & Jerry Mander and published by Earthscan in 2001 (ISBN 1 85383 742 3, 328 pages, £ 14.95). The last two papers in the series are entitled 'Community & Democracy' and 'Self Sufficiency'

Self Sufficiency by Edward Goldsmith

Relative self-sufficiency is another prerequisite of true democracy. Not surprisingly, Thomas Jefferson considered that self-governing communities should be largely self-sufficient, and that they should at least produce their own food, shelter and clothes. This was essential in order to foster the honesty, industry and perseverance on which democracy must be built (*Kemmis, 1990*). Mahatma Gandhi fully agreed. The principle of *swadeshi*, which was critical to his philosophy, meant deriving one's resources from one's own area, rather than importing them from elsewhere.

Professor Ray Dasmann of the 'University of California at Santa Cruz' says the same thing in a different way. He contrasts 'ecosystem man' - who lives off his local ecosystem - with 'biosphere man' - who lives off the whole biosphere. For him it is only when we learn once more to become 'ecosystem people' that our society is truly sustainable.

Traditional communities are well capable of living off the resources of their ecosystems in a highly sustainable manner. Unlike export-oriented corporations that overtax the land and move elsewhere when it ceases to be productive, traditional communities have no other land available to them. Furthermore, they have developed cultural patterns that enable them to do so. It should be obvious that people who have lived in the same place for hundreds of years must have developed food-producing practices which enable them to make the optimum use of their resources, and also to make sure that these are applied. In other words, they alone are in possession of the requisite knowledge and capacities for living there.

Open-minded people who have studied agriculture as practised by local communities in traditional societies have confirmed that this is so. This was certainly true of the agricultural experts sent out by the British government at the end of the 19th century to see how Indian farming methods could be improved.

Both A.O. Hume and John Augustus Voelcker agreed that traditional Indian agriculture was perfectly adapted to local conditions and could not be improved upon (*Hume, 1878; Voelcker, 1893*). To the dismay of the British authorities, Voelcker even went so far as to say that it would be easier for him to suggest improvements to British than to Indian agriculture.

Even the 'World Bank', which has spearheaded the modernization of agriculture in the developing world, admitted in one of its more notorious reports that 'smallholders in Africa are outstanding managers of their own resources - their land and capital, fertilizer and water' (*The World Bank, 1981*). 'Why then modernize and push them into the slums? The answer is that it has to be, as the report fully admits, '[because] subsistence farming is incompatible with the development of the market', and the market, of course, has priority.

It is for this reason that the community is best seen - as it always has been among traditional societies - as comprising not only its human members but the ecosystem with all the living things of which it is part. Wendell Berry sees the community in just this way.

'If we speak of a healthy community,' he writes, 'we cannot be speaking of a community that is only human. We are talking about a neighbourhood of humans in a place, plus a place itself: the soil, the water, its air, and all the families and tribes of the non-human creatures that belong to it.' 'What is more, it is only if this whole community is healthy 'that its members can remain healthy and be healthy in body and mind and in a sustainable manner'.

It follows that a human community should have exclusive access to the wealth provided by the ecosystem of which it is part; together, both constitute what Wendell Berry regards as a true community.

Once communities no longer have this largely exclusive use of their wealth, once they have been privatized and made available to all corners, in particular roving transnational corporations - a situation which superficially sounds highly desirable and very 'democratic' - then their exploitation and rapid destruction become inevitable. This is precisely what happens when we set up the global economy.

This brings us to what must, perhaps, be the most important argument of all for returning to the local community-based economy. If the world's environment is being degraded so rapidly, with a corresponding reduction in its capacity to sustain complex forms of life such as the human species, then it cannot sustain the present impact of our economic activities. To increase this impact still further, as we are doing by creating a global economy based on free trade, is both irresponsible and cynical.

The only responsible policy must be to reduce drastically this impact. It is only in the sort of economy that most of the contributors to this book propose, one in which economic activities are carried out on a far smaller scale and cater for a largely local or regional market, that we can hope to do so.

The great take-over can clearly not proceed indefinitely. Already, the state and the corporations are rapidly becoming incapable of fulfilling the functions they have taken over from the family, the community and the ecosystem, except on an increasingly insignificant scale. This is also true of the take-over of the functions previously fulfilled by the Earth's ecosystems and biosphere, whose roles are to maintain the necessary conditions for life on this planet.

For instance, if world climate is to be stabilized, it will not be by the absurd geo-engineering works that some scientists have proposed, but by drastically reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and by equally drastically increasing the biosphere's capacity to absorb carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas. This means allowing the world's badly depleted forests, its eroded soils and the beleaguered phytoplankton of its oceans to recover, which is only feasible if the impact of our activities on our environment is sufficiently reduced. In other words, the global economy must be replaced by a localized economy with its vastly reduced energy and resource requirements.

Another essential function that the state, in particular, is no longer capable of assuming is the provision of welfare to those in need. Even before the global economy was formally institutionalized, the cost of monetized welfare was in many industrial countries growing faster than GNP, and quite clearly could not be sustained for long. Today, however, in order to maximize competitiveness, the welfare state is being systematically commodified, monetized and provided to the minority that can afford it via the market system, even though the need for it is dramatically increasing as economic globalization increases the number of those in need.

Yet another key function that the state and corporations are ever less capable of fulfilling is the provision of the means to satisfy people's food and material requirements, which in the modern world necessitates jobs. That the global economy will be able to function with but a small fraction of its present work force and a still smaller fraction of that incomparably greater mass of marginalized people who will be looking for jobs in a matter of years has been pointed out throughout this book. According to an article in '*Le Monde Diplomatique*', the formal economy in the Ivory Coast will, within a few years, provide less than 6 per cent of the jobs required, and that country's lot is probably not unique.

What is more, largely as a result of successive structural adjustment programmes, the purchasing power of those individuals who still have jobs is being drastically reduced. This is increasingly the case in the industrial world, where salaries are being slashed, long-term contracts replaced by short-term contracts, full-time work replaced by part-time work, and men replaced by women who are willing to work for less money. It goes without saying that people who have no jobs, and who no longer have access to welfare benefits, or who are paid slave wages, cannot buy many goods and services, while the computers - with which many of them will be replaced - can buy none at all.

Furthermore, as consumption falls, the formal economy will provide still less jobs, which will further reduce consumption and, in turn, further reduce the number of jobs it can provide. We will thus be caught up in a veritable chain reaction that must continue until the formal economy ceases to be a significant source of jobs, food and other goods and services for the bulk of humanity on this planet. In other words, by marginalizing so many people, *the formal economy will marginalize itself*.

All this implies that most people will be forced by necessity to learn to live outside the formal economy. In such a situation the '*LETS*' and '*Time Dollar*' schemes described in this book are not mere curiosities — initiatives that are on too small a scale to make any significant contribution to today's ever more daunting problems. On the contrary, they can provide the very foundations for reconstructing the local economies that alone can fill the void created by the growing irrelevance of the formal economy to people's lives.

In other words, as the corporations and the state become less capable of fulfilling the key functions that they originally took over from the largely non-monetized social economy, there will be no alternative but to allow the latter to reassume many of its original functions.

Unfortunately, our social economy is, at present, ill equipped to take on any new functions since the viable households and communities and ecosystems that previously fulfilled these functions have been seriously degraded under the impact of past economic development.

For this reason we should spare no effort in helping them. Furthermore, if most people are to be marginalized, and many of them rendered destitute by the global economy, they will not simply sit down quietly and starve. Many will undoubtedly revolt against the big corporations that use up their resources, pollute their land and rivers, produce food and consumer goods that only the elite can afford, and provide only a few high-technology jobs that are filled by specialists from abroad.

The humiliation of the 'WTO' at Seattle in November 1999 is undoubtedly the most significant sign of the world's reaction to the horrors of corporate domination - followed by the demonstrations at Washington and the anti-globalization festival at Millau in March 2000, in which more than 50,000 people took part.

But many of those who have been marginalized are also bound to reorganize themselves and form local economies that, in turn, will provide the economic infrastructure for new local communities. These communities will resume the functions they have always fulfilled, functions that provide them with their very '*raison d'être*'. That this must necessarily occur is one of the bright lights on what is otherwise a dismally black horizon, but Wendell Berry sees another.

For Wendell Berry, the issue of global versus local economy is likely to be of major significance in the next decade, and it should provide the basis of a new political realignment. The party of community as he sees it, will have little money and hence little power, but its adherents can only increase, and soon it may well become the party of the majority. If such a party were really to come to power, it would be in a position to develop and implement a coordinated strategy for ensuring a more painless transition to the sort of society and the sort of economy which alone can offer our children any future on this beleaguered planet.

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Community & Democracy by Edward Goldsmith

The family has, until recently, always been the basic unit of social life, but it has also been the extended family and included people who lived in the same household, though not necessarily blood relations. This is in contrast to the truncated nuclear family of the type we have today.

What is more, the family of the past formed an integral part of the community within which all its members lived and worked - and into which it practically merged, rather than existing as an island of solidarity in a vast indifferent non-society as it does today.

For this and similar reasons we should overcome our present prejudice against this irreplaceable institution, which we tend to see as tyrannical and claustrophobic, and whose virtues are only vaunted by heartless right-wing politicians, whose overriding policies - ironical as it may seem - can only lead to further social disintegration.

Much the same can be said for the community which has also now fallen into disfavour. It is a basic, one might say natural, unit of social organization - which it clearly must be since we have lived in extended families and communities during the whole course of our biological, psychological and cognitive evolution.

Alexis de Tocqueville, that great student of town democracy in *'New England'*, saw the community as natural, indeed God-given. 'Man may create kingdoms,' he wrote, 'but the community seems to have sprung from the hand of God' (*de Tocqueville, 1981*).

Significantly, it seems to be only at the levels of the household and the community that most of the key social and economic functions can be effectively fulfilled - though, of course, to be able to do so these key social units must be sufficiently cohesive, imbued with the appropriate worldview, and in possession of the resources they require for fulfilling them.

Let us take an obvious example. One of the most serious problems our society faces today is a massive increase in all sorts of social aberrations, such as crime, delinquency, drug addiction, alcoholism and general violence. These problems are conspicuous by their absence in societies that have not been fully atomized. For instance, a visitor could walk in the poorest slums of Calcutta, where large numbers of people are homeless and sleep out on the pavement, in almost total security.

If this is so, it is largely that such people do not suffer from the terrible social deprivation that they do in an atomized society. They may be very poor and even hungry, but the lives they lead within their family groups have meaning to them - which is ever less the case of the lives led by most people in the cities of the industrial world today.

In a traditional community, social order is also effectively maintained by an extremely powerful force: that of public opinion, reflecting traditional values - and crime and other social aberrations are reduced to a minimum.

We have been taught to regard the pressure of public opinion as an intolerable intrusion into our lives. One of the great advantages of becoming an anonymous inhabitant of a big modern city is that it 'liberates' us from the 'tyranny of public opinion' which imposes on us all sorts of obligations to our family, community, society and ecosystem.

But, no one has yet devised an alternative strategy for controlling crime and other aberrations, and hence for maintaining social order. The state can engage more and more policemen, spend billions on an ever more elaborate judicial system and build more and more prisons, but all this has very little effect - and, in any case, it is but a means of masking the symptoms of a social disease, which by rendering a little more tolerable such expedients can only serve to perpetuate.

Today, needless to say, as the global economy marginalizes more and more people, this disease can only worsen and spread to those areas of the world that have succeeded, until now, in remaining relatively unaffected by it. Much the same can be said for the other serious problems that confront our modern society such as poverty, malnutrition, the annihilation of our natural resources, the population explosion and so on.

If crime and other social aberrations can only be dealt with at a communal level, the same must be true of democratic government. If democracy is 'government by the people for the people', it is difficult to regard as truly democratic the sort of political system under which we live, in which individuals limit their contribution to governing themselves by voting only every five years for a candidate over whose political conduct, until the next election, they have absolutely no control.

This is particularly the case today, when the corporate world has mastered the art of influencing the outcome of elections by massive and increasingly sophisticated public-relations campaigns, and whose interests, rather than those of the people who elected them, governments everywhere have now come to represent.

If government is to be really 'by the people', then the people must themselves participate in the daily business of government, and it is clearly not at the national, let alone at the global level, that they can possibly do so, but only at the local level among people who know each other, see each other regularly and see themselves as members of the same community.

Jefferson also always insisted that face-to-face participation in municipal government alone enables citizens to subordinate what they take to be their immediate personal interests to the public good. He advocated that states should be broken up into local wards of such a size as to enable the full interaction and, participation of citizens in their own government (Coleman, 1994).

De Tocqueville, like the ancient Greeks, 'identified freedom with self-determination, and saw democracy as fostering freedom, precisely because it enabled people to participate in municipal government' (Boesche, 1987, quoted by Hultgren, 1994). He also noted how, in the 'New England' town democracies where such conditions were largely met, 'each person's cooperation in its affairs assures his attachment to its interests; the well-being it affords him secures his affection; and its welfare is the aim of his ambitions and his future exertions' (Herith, 1986, quoted by Hultgren, 1994).

The Swiss system of government may also provide a model. It has always been based on the commune or *gemeinde*, which is largely autonomous and self-governing. Traditionally, it decides what taxes should be paid and how the community should spend the money allocated to it. It also actively oversees the communal administration, whose proposals and expenditures it can reject, and deals with such issues as public service, primary education, local police and welfare for the poor and the sick. Really important decisions are made by a free assembly of the citizens.

Significantly, the commune existed long before the cantons into which the confederation is now divided. Communes located in a particular valley did occasionally join together to form loose organizations or alliances. However, it was only with the Napoleonic conquests at the beginning of the 19th century that they were raised to the rank of cantons, and even later that they were linked together to form the Swiss confederation. Even then, the central government has traditionally had relatively little power, partly because it is only elected for a year, and partly too because its political composition must reflect that of the parliament, which seriously limits the changes it can bring about.

Unfortunately, this system of government cannot survive economic development, which necessarily involves abandoning local self-sufficiency and turning what were once self-governing communes into dormitory towns no longer capable of running themselves. Indeed, in recent times there has been a steady fall in the number of people who take part in local assemblies, and whereas the power once resided with the communes, it is increasingly the confederate government and the large corporations that control the country's economic and social life.

Now that governments, by signing the 'GATT Uruguay Round' and setting up the 'WTO', have delegated the task of running their economic affairs to what is, in effect, a world government, decisions will be taken by a body of people who remain distanced from those affected, who are indifferent to the real interests of the common people and who are subservient to the interests of transnational corporations. In other words, we will have moved still further away from 'true democracy'.

For this reason alone, and there are many others, true democracy - in the form of government by a loose association of largely self-governing communities - is only possible if the economy is structured in the same way.

Political localization requires *economic localization* (the corollary, of course, also being true), and the conduct of the economy is yet another function that has to be fulfilled primarily at the community level.

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The Way Out - How To Get There By Kirkpatrick Sale

The author is one of the most influential writers of our time on the radical scene and on the bioregional vision. His books include 'Human Scale' and 'Rebels Against the Future', the latter an evaluation of the Luddite struggle against the industrial revolution. He has been invited to be the Guest of Honour at the London meeting of 'The Academic Inn' on September 12 (and is submitting this article as a discussion paper).

Our work towards a way out of the present technological mess is inspired chiefly by the knowledge that people everywhere are dissatisfied, to one degree or another, with the technocratic life that is increasingly thrust upon them.

Letters to the editor, talk shows, surveys and back-fence complaints all suggest that the computer-generated technomania is, as *Newsweek* has said, 'outstripping our capacity to cope, transforming our mores, shuffling our economy, reordering our priorities...and shifting our concept of reality', leading to profound disquiet and malaise.

Furthermore, all the indications of what people really *do* want, including a 'Harwood Group' survey recently published in 'Yes' magazine, point to a world without the pressures and constraints of high technology and instead embracing more time with family and friends, more development of neighbourhood and community, more connections with nature, and more honest work with simpler tools.

There already exists a widespread, if not completely coherent, movement towards a low-tech/alternative-tech future. Its main features are, on the one hand, a move towards abstinence, resistance and refusal, as in the sort of simple-living choices offered by 'Plain' magazine, and the Amish and back-to-nature examples, including the specific organisations opposing cars, televisions, pesticides, biotechnology, incineration, animal testing, food irradiation and world trade; and, on the other, a move towards radically new relationships with nature at a non-technological level, starting with organic gardening, whole-food diets, vegetarianism, backpacking and natural healing, and leading on to forms of human-nature harmonising inspired by deep ecology, American Indian shamanism, modern witch practises, and ancient and Eastern religions. This, in toto, represents a considerable constituency to build on.

Steps to the sane future ultimately must be fashioned locally, responding to local conditions and needs - that is, at a communitarian and bioregional level - and therefore are likely to be different in different places, even leading to different arrangements in different places. Therefore a self-conscious continental or international movement, though it can certainly offer necessary precepts and philosophies, inherent policies and prescriptions, cannot determine all the steps, or stones, or paths, or highways, than any locality should adopt to solve its own problems and advance its own causes. There is, in short, not one way out, but many.

In order for communities and bioregions to be able to determine their own courses, however, to exercise true democracy starting from face-to-face direct participation, the national and international arrangements that now stand in their way will have to be dismantled. That is a tall order, and steps in that direction are by no means easy to contrive; but there is really no other way. There cannot be local power of the necessary kind as long as there are political and economic strangleholds on power exercised by large corporate and national organisations.

Of the first order of priority, therefore, must be ways to confront those large organisations, to demystify and delegitimise them, to gradually rescind and reverse their monopolies on power, using all the means of scholarship, persuasion, intervention, activism, and deliberation at our disposal. It is a long-haul task, and victories will not come easily, yet logic dictates no other course.

If this syllogism is accepted, then it suggests active steps on three levels:

- first, in support of the resistance/simple-living forces
- second, in support of the withdrawal/nature-harmonising forces
- third, in support of the decentralist anti-corporate/anti-nationalist forces

It also suggests that none of these should have priority and all should be pursued as actively as our time and resources permit.

The forms of such support are varied and will shift in scope and emphasis according to our abilities, but there are certain known processes for successful social-change movements.

On the one hand, we must continue the work on researching and exploring, then writing and speaking about, the evils of the present technological system and the corporate/political forces behind it, always with the understanding that high computer-driven technology is to be seen as the chief manifestation of the problem: that means, too, similar work that illuminates the beneficial, salific, necessary aspects of the resistance/withdrawal trends, and can provide both strategies and tactics for the decentralisation trend.

On the other hand we must not fall into traps that bind us to public-policy, change-the-law work that inevitably legitimises the very institutions we seek to abandon - that includes all kinds of state and national electoralism - or that force us into broad-coalition work with elements that do not share our analyses and goals.

The steps by which one - one person, one movement - gets from here to there are never clear or easy, either in imagining or in effecting. It may be that they are impossible of imagining correctly; or it may be that the impossible can become possible only if imagined while it is impossible.

Perhaps it is our task to imagine the impossible - and then proceed on the long, arduous, uncertain task of making it possible.

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Sustainable Self-Governance for Wessex by Colin Bex

Colin Bex is President of The Wessex Regionalists. For details of the administrative changes they are proposing see their discussion document 'The Statute of Wessex' obtainable, price £1, from The Secretary-General, Wessex Regionalists, 1 /2 Atlantic Road South, Weston-super-Mare, Somersetshire, Wessex

I came by my first copy of *'The Breakdown of Nations'*, the prophetic work of 1957 by Leopold Kohr, in the mid '80s. It was a decade after I had been fired as a result of refusing to work on a scheme to build over the ten acre St. Paul's senior school playing field, the last sizeable piece of open space in Hammersmith (see *Nooks and Corners of the new barbarism, Private Eye* Nov '73); some eight years after I had stood in a London local election for the *'Save Westminster Action Group (SWAG)'*, and some six years after I had become committed to the idea of standing in a general election on a policy promoting regional self-government for Wessex.

Regardless of the seemingly fathomless...but in the circumstances...understandable apathy of the general electorate on account of the *status quo* since then, I have found no good reason to abandon the project and indeed, earlier this year despite censorship of my candidature by press, radio and TV...a matter I am pursuing with the *'Press Complaints Commission'*...I received 167 votes contesting the marginal, safe *'Conservative Tory'* seat in the Wessaxen heartland of North Somerset.

Many of those votes were from people who on their doorsteps, told me that had I not called by, they were not going to vote. In voting they joined that number of the 40% of people who opposed the 20% venal, craven or stupid enough to allow Blair's new-Labour Tory cabinet back into Westminster with a 'landslide'.

Many still believe...or claim to believe...this as 'democracy', whereas anyone who knows anything about our system realises it exists to ensure election of one or other of the three Tory candidates competing with each other in most constituencies to take a turn to entrench centralised capitalist dictatorship.

With the exception of the man in the white suit...who lost this time anyway...and the doctor standing to save a hospital, clearly under the transparent mathematically undemocratic system of voting which obtains at present, there was neither precedent nor likelihood I would win the seat for Wessex.

My policy was simple. I was presenting them the opportunity to vote for an end to misrule from Westminster and Europe for replacement with self-determination for a modern historic Wessex region.

Until a state of emergency is declared in Britain, it is I believe incumbent on all of us to stand for the necessary change rather than to vote...or not to vote...for those hell-bent on preventing it. Just imagine if, say, a million candidates were to decide to put up rather than shut up. In the continued absence of appropriate change, roll on the day!

In the meantime, the 0.25% of the Wells constituency responsible and bright enough to turn out and vote for a Wessex region retains genuine decentralisation securely on the agenda.

As invasion and conquest took their toll during 'first' millennium Britain, the location and areas of territory comprising the Kingdom of Wessex varied. It started small, some believe in Hamwick...now part of Southampton... and the small village of Wilton was once its capital. At its largest, it encompassed land now forming Cornwall (Kernow), north up to the Midlands and east to include Berkshire, with Winchester its capital.

Currently, the government's infamous bisection of Wessex through Hampshire into South-West and South-East England is brutish. Based on the boundary drawn up for bureaucratic convenience for defence by the Home Guard against Germany during the second war, it is anachronistic and boorish.

Under the auspices of the hoary old centrist principle *'divide and rule'*, it is being used by central government via the existing three-Tory-parties' area representatives who have stitched up the constitution, to concrete over the territory under the guise of devolution.

Whilst reinstatement of this boundary may be needed again in the foreseeable future, for the time being at least, it is irrelevant. Clearly it must be edged into the dustbin of history without delay...although presently the only people likely to do so are the Wessaxens themselves.

Initially, a Wessex re-established would include the historic counties of Berkshire, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Somerset, Devon and Dorset, with Kernow our neighbour west of the Tamar. Ultimate determination of the boundaries, especially those bordering the north and east i.e. including people living in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire, would be resolved only after a referendum seeking the occupants' wishes and preferred sense of identity. Quite possibly parishes within for example east Gloucestershire may wish to remain linked with the Midlands i.e. the new Mercia, whereas some in the south, and in west Oxfordshire, may well wish to resume part of the new Wessex.

Just as the traditional counties, towns and villages were established sympathetically within the natural local topography (see map), so too would be the future localities. Swathes of restored non-development common land of varying width, contiguous with any natural planted and topographical features, would be introduced interjacent each settlement and its environs.

In addition to...and in some cases replacement for...the broken lines drawn on maps along the centres of rivers and the ridges of hills, mountain ranges, hedgerows and ditches, this arrangement would constitute a new form of boundary - what I have termed a diffuse' boundary. It would provide an area demarcating the limit to which development growth had access and it would provide recreation opportunities in a planted habitat in which adequate, safe public footways and cycle ways would be provided alongside existing roads, obviating the need for pedestrians to cross either.

The widths of over-wide carriageways would be reduced to accommodate such provision, and in cases where the road was no wider than one or two lanes, land would be reclaimed from the edges of adjoining fields for use as public footpaths. Where hedgerows have been removed, there would be replacements and where appropriate, new hedges would be planted in addition.

Smallholdings would be reinstated. In lieu of methods approved by Mugabe in Zimbabwe to restore white owned farmland to the African, adequate but modest compensation in the form of Wessex bonds would be paid to juggernaut farmland owners, whose land would be distributed or let in parcels of varying sizes and of mixed amenity where appropriate - e.g. wetland, arable, pasture, hillside - and once again, arable farming would be practised by rotation of crops with mechanical weeding and only minimal assistance from approved biodegradable pesticides where necessary.

Rented land would be let at affordable rates, index linked to protect its tenants from all damaging effects of fluctuations in the market and the weather, and from vicissitudes of nature and industry and national government affecting the health of plants and animals.

One carriageway of each motorway and dual- carriageway 'A' road within the region may be reinstated as a two-way single carriageway with a maximum speed limit of 60 m.p.h. Where appropriate, the spare carriageway would be re-designated for exclusive use of various modes of public transport powered only by bio-friendly fuels. Where superfluous, one carriageway would be demolished, the land reinstated for replanting. This essential new infrastructure work would be paid for partly from profits and fat-cat perks and fortunes made by the companies and directors who built them, and partly from the '*National Treasury*' via the Transport budget.

Access for container juggernauts would be phased out and, finance hitherto squandered on motorway construction, would be allocated to restoring the '*Great Western*' rail network which...with the help of millions of pounds of public money in the '60s...Dr. Beeching and the Unions decimated.

A crucial feature *sine qua non* for healthy regional self-management, would be the radical change of turning government the right way up - from 'top-down' to 'bottom-up. This would ensure the smallest settlements - hamlets, parishes, hundreds - would have power restored to protect themselves from predation, or other threat inimical to their best interests by any larger grouping - e.g. multinational or other disproportionately gross corporation or government - council, district, county, regional, national, European or global. For as long as they remained, it would be incumbent on such bodies to co-operate with the smallest units, helping if, as and when invited and without conditions - in the spirit of true subsidiarity.

There would be no 'capital' city in Wessex. Elected representatives from all the parishes in turn would comprise roving '*Witan*' which over time would tour the region to enable comprehensive understanding of the problems and successes experienced within different areas.

Representatives of the parishes would serve on the District, County and Regional Witan and would be appointed to represent Wessex at the '*Europe of the Regions Assembly*', itself freed from bondage in one or other of the dying nation states to meet in a variety of suitable locations Europe-wide.

Inter alia, in order to cut down the damaging threats over Wessaxen lives due to the disproportionate power and influence of money, a 'Real Bank of Wessex' would be chartered. It would exist as a confederation of 'County Banks' with branches or agencies readily accessible within towns and villages throughout the region

It would operate as a mutual credit system via local money together with alternatives to legal tender. There would be credit and debit with zero balance - no interest would be charged. This currency would be used to fulfil two principles namely, that of a means of payment, and as a means of value. A basket of commodities would be agreed with local chambers of commerce.

Unlike the 'US of A' for example...whose national deficit now exceeds \$5.9 trillion...there would be no regional debt. The arrangement would function to provide protection from the vicissitudes of international and national banking by way of insulating the regional economy...rather than by isolating it...a principle to set an example worldwide.