

# THE Round Table

Spring  
1995

"...a path from where we are to where we should be." -- Peter Maurin

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# WHY THIS ISSUE?

Is there work available? Does it provide a living? Is the work meaningful? Does the work bring forth something to enhance the lives of others? On the other hand, what items are we able to buy? Where do they come from? What was used in producing them? How were the workers treated and paid who produced them? How does the work we do or the things we consume affect the earth and our future? There are probably few of us who are happy with every answer we give to these questions and probably few of us feel much control over the economic forces that determine the choices we do have. With the growth of the global market, the average person has less say about these critical matters. This Round Table addresses this issue by looking at ways that we can regain control over our economic lives. By creating alternative enterprises based on cooperative models and by finding ways to create economic opportunity for low-income people we can engage in economic activity which both empowers people and enhances life rather than just maximizes profit.

Virginia Druhe does an excellent job of describing community-based economics in contrast to the free-market capitalism of the global economy. She also lays out suggestions about what is needed to make it work. Wendell Berry makes the point that the politics of food, like any other politics, involves our freedom. We can make choices about what we eat, rather than being passive. Monica Hingorani looks at Mahatma Gandhi's vision of economic development and suggests that a Gandhi-inspired program in India might have applications to women on welfare in the United States. Glen Larson describes the H.O.M.E. community programs in rural Maine which offer shelter, health-care, education, work, and participation in a land trust. Kim Jayne tells the story of the St. Louis Women's Support Group and their efforts toward individual and community development. The centerfold lists some alternative enterprises, ranging from cooperative ventures to those which offer opportunity to low-income people.

In our regular feature articles, Bob Corbett reminds us that although Haiti is less often in the news, the suffering and injustice endured by the Haitian people has not greatly lessened; Mary Ann McGivern gives us a review of Merv Puleo's book, The Struggle is One: Voices and Visions of Liberation; Annjie Schiefelbein describes the sharing of stories done around Karen House; and Mark Scheu addresses the vindictiveness that is so pervasive in these times. Elmira Taliaferro offers a poem about Karen House.

We hope this sampling of articles focusing on community-based economic alternatives will encourage all of us to continue on the path toward economic justice.



- Teka Childress

Cover illustration for  
The Round Table  
by Larry Nolte

## *the St. Louis Catholic Worker Community*

*Karen House  
1840 Hogan  
St. Louis, MO. 63106  
314-621-4052*



*Ella Dixon House  
1540 N. 17th St.  
St. Louis, MO. 63106  
314-231-2039*

# TWO WORLDS, TWO WAYS

by Virginia Druhe

As I drank my coffee this morning, the radio announcer informed me that Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve, is still terribly worried about inflation. Greenspan has raised interest rates six times this year, trying to cool off our overheated national economy. He thinks he may need to raise them again. Unemployment is down to 5 1/2% and that, it turns out, is bad for the country.

I look out the window. Same street, same empty lots, same unemployed men, women and teens walking in the cold on their morning errands. Do we live in the same world as Greenspan, I wonder? Is what is good for Greenspan and good for General Motors good for America? It's pretty clear to me the answer is no, we do not live in the same world, or the same economy. Our



worlds are separate and not equal. I am not discouraged by this. I did not think the Federal Reserve was the solution to my neighborhood's problems anyway, just as the International Monetary Fund has not been a solution to poverty in Latin America or Africa.

Far from being a solution, these large institutions are part of the problem. The IMF has overseen a net capital flow of over \$100 billion in the last decade from Latin America to banks in the U.S. and Europe. The policies of the IMF, the Federal Reserve, national governments and transnational corporations, one begins to think, create poverty far more often than they alleviate it.

These institutions and their policies claim that a minimum wage that lifts families out of poverty is inflationary. These are the policies that have led to a 20% increase in child poverty in the U.S. in the last ten years. These are not the folk to lead us to better times. Better we settle in and do that work ourselves, recognizing that at least for now there are two worlds, two ways of viewing economics and two ways of doing accounting.

One world wears shoes, speaks English, is high-tech and is predominantly white. These are people who benefit from the dominant economic system, and who do its accounting. They are healthy, comfortable and educated. They are highly mobile and communicate around the globe by cellular phones and fax modems. They appear on television and make decisions that affect the lives of many.

The other world is much less visible and quieter. Most of the people are brown, black or yellow. They watch T.V., listen to the radio, may not be able to read. They speak many languages, dialects, slangs. They are often ill-fed and suffer a variety of chronic, treatable diseases. They have very few choices in their lives and are most likely to be un- or underemployed.

Virginia Druhe, as part of her work for the American Friends Service Committee, is coordinating a group of economic literacy trainers.

Each world has its own economic priorities. The big economy talks about money, the quiet economy talks about people. One follows economic "laws," the other seeks economic choices. One confuses, even obfuscates; the other empowers. One ignores most of women's work; the other recognizes that women, and often children, are central actors in any economy. The big economy at this time is neo-liberal capitalism, also called the global economy, free-market capitalism, Reaganomics, trickle-down, supply-side, voodoo economics. It talks often about privatization, free trade, structural adjustment, stabilization and downsizing government.

The quiet economy is sometimes called popular economics or community-based economics. It talks a lot about survival, alternatives, cooperatives, sustainable development and community organizing. Not surprisingly, each system has its own ways of doing accounting. Mainstream accounting looks at costs and profits based on dollars and material goods. Community accounting looks at behaviors, benefits and well-being as part of the economic equation.

The accounting system used by governments, large businesses and the international financial institutions reflects their perspective. All human economic behavior is not counted, only commodities. A meal prepared at home does not count, only the hamburger bought on the run. Caring for the young or elderly does not count until it is done in a nursing home or day care center. Neighbors sitting out on a summer evening, enjoying each other and keeping an eye on kids on the street does not count. Burglar alarms do.

This kind of accounting grossly distorts our definition of reality, problems and solutions. Suddenly kids and families are an economic drag, hamburgers and burglar alarms are solutions. A further mainstream accounting problem is that any paid work or any item produced counts, whether its overall impact is constructive or destructive. Cigarettes count as much as vitamins. A military plane that destroys homes in Baghdad counts more than a family car that serves for ten years. (Military spending is a major distortion and sapping of our economic resources.)

Environmental destruction counts big: strip mining, clear cutting forests or depleting the world fish supply is counted as growth. The depletion of natural resources, environmental pollution, health problems and costs of cleanup and disposal are all called "external factors" and are not included in calculating profits. So we have a "growing" economy amid communities that can't afford to cleanup toxic sites.

What are we, who are nearer the bottom, to do to make a difference for ourselves and our communities? Clearly these are not issues that one can tackle alone. Who are our allies? What are our opportunities? How

can we learn from the experience of others?

In the several years I have wandered through these questions, I have come to a framework I find useful in trying to understand what it takes to sustain communities and how we might move forward. I imagine five layers of skills that ultimately need to work together. It seems to me that if we attempt work on one level before previous ones have been addressed our chances for success are very small. Likewise, if we abandon one level as we begin work on the next, we are likely to find ourselves in a house of cards.

The first level of need for this work is for individuals to have a minimal personal support network. Anyone who is going to be active in shaping community processes needs a partner or three to call on that can help keep personal and family agendas on track. We also need someone to turn to for support when the work becomes too discouraging or confusing, when a meeting goes badly, when years of work feels betrayed.

On the second level, a local community of such people must be organized in a public way. Neighbors need ways to share information, make decisions together and represent their agenda in public forums on housing, development, safety, education and so on. Our communities may have a lot of experience and even expertise on this level. There are also some avenues for institutional and financial support for this kind of community organizing, especially from churches.

A third level of community-based development is fundamental economic literacy. Many of us who are very savvy about the political process, who can weave our way around social and political issues like dancers, do not have a first clue on the fundamentals of our economic system. Communities often have very little sense of strategy on economic issues: What do we mean by community development? What are the problems of the market system? How can we exploit the advantages of markets without recreating their negative aspects? How do racism, classism and sexism relate to the economy? Is it best to address housing first or jobs? Should housing be primarily rental or owner occupied? Should jobs be sought from large corporations in the suburbs? Is tax abatement a useful strategy? When? Is a shopping area a priority, or light industry? Why?

Eyes glaze over in confusion, helplessness, and anger. We need a sense of orientation, a common language for our experiences, a sense of direction and options. At this time there are several national organizations that provide support on this level to local communities, but it is clear that we do not have nearly enough people, money, places or links in the chain and communities flounder on these questions.

When a community has developed a clear understanding of its resources, needs and opportunities, and



has a strategy for moving forward, it faces a new level of challenges that can be called the need for technical assistance. We may need lawyers to form a development corporation, financial advice to structure a loan, introduction to bookkeeping, a basic understanding of business plans and marketing, information on requesting or submitting proposals, writing grants, zoning laws, etc., etc. We live in a very specialized, regulated and technological world. We need these skills, and we need them freed of the baggage of values that mainstream

economics carries.

Finally, any community effort for development or local control needs financing. Communities need creative and assertive arrangements to meet their needs without establishing a crippling cycle of debt. There are some exciting examples, both in the U.S. and internationally, to meet this need. There are credit unions, community loan funds, development banks, loans through the Community Reinvestment Act, peer lending programs and computerized barter systems.

There are some issues that remain of concern for communities, no matter how preliminary or sophisticated their skills and experience. One constant is the need to share our thoughts and experiences with similar projects and communities across town and across the globe. There is no substitute for the growth and learning, the breadth and excitement that comes from these exchanges.

It seems that at every level we are grappling with how we define ourselves in relationship to home, workplace, community and the globe. We are trying to define or redefine this set of ties, to make them fit who we are and what we need; to name the cost and the value of each in relation to the others. A Lakota man I know says he believes community economic development is a matter of restoring relationships. That thought often throws light on some thorny problem for me when nothing else has.

Many of the economic issues we try to address are profoundly shaped by technology. The aging blue and white collar workers have carried dramatic personal and social costs. The use and misuse of technology is at the root of most questions of pollution and environmental destruction. We can no longer seek economic well-being without serious attention to appropriate technology and sustainable development.

Finally, in all our economic endeavors we face issues of race, class and gender. Who is rich and who is poor is profoundly related to color and gender, both locally and globally. Who has access to information and technology follows lines of gender and race. Which economic rules apply is often shaped by the class status and political connections of the person involved.

It is not that difficult to say these things, of course. It is far more difficult to achieve them. Suddenly we are confronted with real, ordinary human beings trying to make their lives work. We are confronted with tired feet, lousy transportation, a myriad of fears, confusions and distractions. Fortunately, we also begin to experience the pleasure of relationships that cross boundaries, unify our splintered lives and are a taste of the economic justice we seek.



# THE PLEASURES OF EATING

by Wendell Berry

*Published in WHAT ARE PEOPLE FOR (North Point Press, 1990) here excerpted by Mark Scheu in abridged form with permission of the author.*

Many times, after I have finished a lecture on the decline of American farming and rural life, someone in the audience has asked, "What can city people do?"

"Eat responsibly," I have usually answered.... I begin with the proposition that eating is an agricultural act. Eating ends the annual drama of the food economy that begins with planting and birth. Most eaters, however, are no longer aware that this is true. They think of food as an agricultural product, but they do not think of themselves as participants in agriculture. They think of themselves as "consumers." If they think beyond that, they recognize that they are passive consumers. They buy what they want—or what they have been persuaded to want—within the limits of what they can get. They pay, mostly without protest, what they are charged. And they mostly ignore certain critical questions about the quality and the cost of what they are sold: How fresh is it? How pure or clean is it, how free of dangerous chemicals? How far was it transported, and what did transportation add to the cost? How much did manufacturing or packaging or advertising add to the cost? When the food product has been manufactured or "processed" or "precooked," how has that affected its quality or nutritional value?

Most urban shoppers would tell you that food is produced on farms. But most of them do not know what farms, or what kinds of farms, or where the farms are, or what knowledge of skills are involved in farming....

The specialization of production induces specialization of consumption. Patrons of the entertainment industry, for example, entertain themselves less and less and have become more and more passively dependent on commercial suppliers. This is certainly also true of patrons of the food industry, who have tended more and more to be mere consumers—passive, uncritical, and dependent. Indeed, this sort of consumption may be said to be one of the chief goals of industrial production. The food industrialists have by now persuaded millions of consumers to prefer food that is already prepared. They will grow, deliver, and cook your food for you and (just like your mother) beg you to eat it. That they do not yet offer to insert it, prechewed, into your mouth is only because they have found no profitable way to do so. We may rest assured that they would be glad to find such a way. The real industrial food consumer would be strapped to a table with a tube running from the food factory directly into his or her stomach.

Perhaps I exaggerate, but not by much. The industrial eater is, in fact, one who does not know that eating is an agricultural act, who no longer knows or imagines the connections between eating and the land, and who is therefore necessarily passive and uncritical—in short, a victim....

There is, then, a politics of food that, like any politics, involves our freedom. We still (sometimes) remember that we cannot be free if our minds and voices are controlled by someone else. But we have neglected to understand that we cannot be free if our food and its sources are controlled by someone else. The condition of the passive consumer of food is not a democratic condi-

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Wendell Berry, farmer, poet, novelist, and essayist, lives simply on his farm in Kentucky. For further reading on the U.S. agricultural situation, we suggest his seminal work, The Unsettling of America.

tion. One reason to eat responsibly is to live free.

But if there is a food politics, there are also a food esthetics and a food ethics, neither of which is dissociated from politics. Like industrial sex, industrial eating has become a degraded, poor, and paltry thing. Our kitchens and other eating places more and more resemble filling stations, as our homes more and more resemble motels. "Life is not very interesting," we seem to have decided. "Let its satisfactions be minimal, perfunctory, and fast." We hurry through our meals to go to work and hurry through our work in order to "recreate" ourselves in the evenings and on weekends and vacations. And then we hurry, with the greatest possible speed and noise

and violence, through our recreation--for what? To eat the billionth hamburger at some fast food joint hellbent on increasing the "quality" of our life? And all this is carried out in a remarkable obliviousness to the causes and effects, the possibilities and the purposes, of the life of the body in this world....

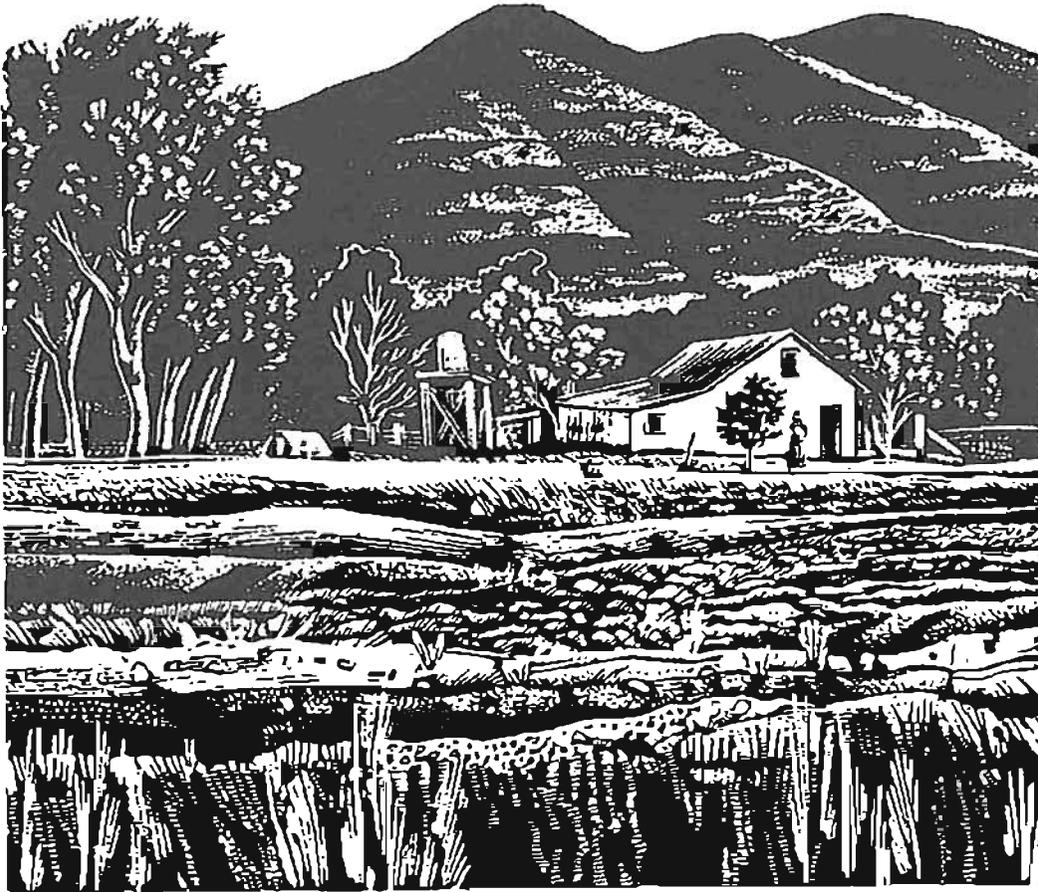
The consumer... must be kept from discovering that, in the food industry--as in any other

industry--the overriding concerns are not quality and health, but volume and price. For decades now the entire industrial food economy, from the large farms and feedlots to the chains of supermarkets and fast food restaurants, has been obsessed with volume. It has relentlessly increased scale in order to increase volume in order (presumably) to decrease costs. But as scale increases, diversity declines; as diversity declines, so does health; as health declines, the dependence on drugs and chemicals necessarily increases. As capital replaces labor, it does so by substituting machines, drugs and chemicals for human workers and for the natural health

and fertility of the soil. The food is produced by any means or any shortcut that will increase profits. And the business of the cosmeticians of advertising is to persuade the consumer that food so produced is good, tasty, healthful, and a guarantee of marital fidelity and long life.

It is possible, then, to be liberated from the husbandry and wifery of the old household food economy. But one can be thus liberated only by entering a trap (unless one sees ignorance and helplessness as the signs of privilege, as many people apparently do). The trap is the ideal of industrialism: a walled city surrounded by valves that let merchandise in but no consciousness out.

How does one escape this trap? Only voluntarily, the same way that one went in: by restoring one's consciousness of what is involved in eating; by reclaiming responsibility for one's own part in the food economy.... Eaters, that is, must understand that eating takes place inescapably in the world, that it is inescapably an



agricultural act, and that how we eat determines, to a considerable extent, how the world is used. This is a simple way of describing a relationship that is inexpressibly complex. To eat responsibly is to understand and enact, so far as one can, this complex relationship. What can one do? Here is a list, probably not definitive:

1. Participate in food production to the extent that you can. If you have a yard or just a porch box or a pot in a sunny window, grow something to eat in it. Make a little compost of your kitchen scraps and use it for fertilizer. Only by growing some food for yourself can you become acquainted with the beautiful energy

cycle that revolves from soil to seed to flower to fruit to food to offal to decay, and around again. You will be fully responsible for any food that you grow for yourself, and you will know all about it. You will appreciate it fully, having known it all its life.

2. Prepare your own food. This means reviving in your own mind and life the arts of the kitchen and household. This should enable you to eat more cheaply, and it will give you a measure of "quality control": you will have some reliable knowledge of what has been added to the food that you eat.

3. Learn the origins of the food you buy, and buy that food that is produced closest to your home. The idea that every locality should be, as much as possible, the source of its own food makes several kinds of sense. The locally produced food supply is the most secure, the freshest, and the easiest for local consumers to know about and to influence.

4. Whenever possible, deal directly with a local farmer, gardener, or orchardist. All the reasons listed for the previous suggestion apply here. In addition, by such dealing you eliminate the whole pack of merchants, transporters, processors, packagers, and advertisers who thrive at the expense of both producers and consumers.

5. Learn, in self-defense, as much as you can of the economy and technology of industrial food production. What is added to food that is not food, and what do you pay for these additions?

6. Learn what is involved in the best farming and gardening.

7. Learn as much as you can, by direct observation and experience if possible, of the life histories of the food species.

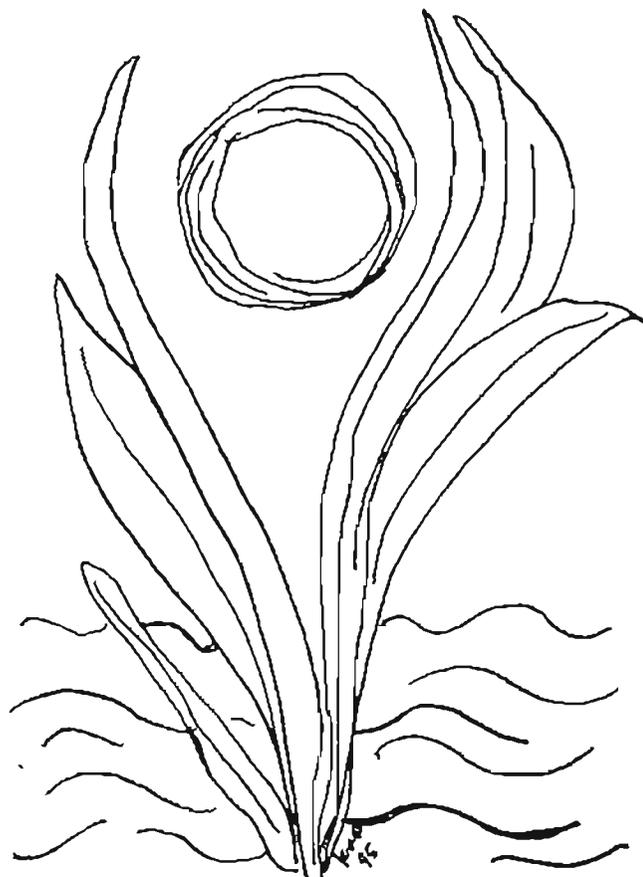
The last suggestion seems particularly important to me. Many people are now as much estranged from the lives of domestic plants and animals (except for flowers and dogs and cats) as they are from the lives of the wild ones. This is regrettable, for these domestic creatures are in diverse ways attractive; there is much pleasure in knowing them. And farming, animal husbandry, horticulture, and gardening, at their best, are complex and comely arts; there is much pleasure in knowing them, too....

The pleasure of eating should be an extensive pleasure, not that of the mere gourmet. People who know the garden in which their vegetables have grown and know that the garden is healthy will remember the beauty of the growing plants, perhaps in the dewy first light of morning when gardens are at their best. Such a memory involves itself with the food and is one of the pleasures of eating. The knowledge of the good health of the garden relieves and frees and comforts the eater.... A significant part of the pleasure of eating is in one's accurate consciousness of the lives and the world from

which food comes. The pleasure of eating, then, may be the best available standard of our health. And this pleasure, I think, is pretty fully available to the urban consumer who will make the necessary effort.

I mentioned earlier the politics, esthetics, and ethics of food. But to speak of the pleasure of eating is to go beyond those categories. Eating with the fullest pleasure—pleasure, that is, that does not depend on ignorance—is perhaps the profoundest enactment of our connection with the world. In this pleasure we experience and celebrate our dependence and our gratitude, for we are living from mystery, from creatures we did not make and powers we cannot comprehend. When I think of the meaning of food, I always remember these lines by the poet William Carlos Williams, which seem to me merely honest:

There is nothing to eat,  
seek it where you will,  
but the body of the Lord.  
The blessed plants  
and the sea, yield it  
to the imagination  
intact.



# BUILDING A H.O.M.E.

by Glenn Larson

*Homeworkers Organized for More Employment, or H.O.M.E., is a cooperative community in rural Maine dedicated to economic and social reconstruction. Since its beginning in 1970 as a craft cooperative, it has mushroomed and expanded to meet the "felt needs" of the poor in and around Orland, Maine. Today, in addition to its store which sells home-produced crafts, H.O.M.E. includes a Learning Center, a Lumber Mill, a Land-Trust, a Day-Care, a Free Clinic, a Food Bank and five shelters for the homeless. Its primary emphasis is to develop an alternative economic system so that people can gain independence from the indignities and insecurities of the capitalist system, and provide for their needs for housing, education and employment.*

*H.O.M.E. started as a response to the closing down of a shoe factory and the subsequent unemployment of its workers. In the Maine country-side, a lot of people are homebound; so the shoe factory had hired people to do work out of their homes. In 1970, when the factory closed down, the workers not only lost their only source of income, but also had seemingly few options due to their immobility. Lucy Poulin, who at that time was a Carmelite nun, joined with about 20 other people to start a craft cooperative. The idea was that people could produce crafts at home and sell them at a storefront to the many tourists who traveled through Orland on the way to Bar Harbor, a popular vacation spot. Today the craft store is supplied with crafts made by over 300 crafters in their homes in Maine as well as crafts produced in H.O.M.E.'s own pottery and weaving studios. In the following article, Glenn Larson describes H.O.M.E.'s Land Trust, education and health care programs.*

The formation of land trusts is the most notable alternative economic pattern worked out at H.O.M.E. The land trust is an alternative way of providing homes for homeless families and low-income families. We are a non-discriminating, non-profit corporation with the object of relieving housing and economic oppression. A land trust offers an opportunity for home ownership to many people who currently have no option except renting. The trust holds land as a corporate body and leases house sites to home owners. The leases are long-term and are inheritable. A home owner may sell his or her home, if necessary.

It is our normal practice to enter any family who comes to us, and is in transitional housing, in a housing counseling program. This program begins with a thorough explanation of the path that the family will take on its way to permanent housing. This path includes be-

coming a member of our land trust organization (if the family desires), attendance at meetings of the land trust, getting put on a housing list, witnessing the house-building process, being chosen for the next house and participating in the design of the house. In addition, counseling is given in the mortgaging process and in meeting other monetary needs, such as downpayments. H.O.M.E. carries out and is the source of funding of this activity.

In our system of home ownership there are no housing subsidy mechanisms of the usual sort. The houses are built with lumber that has been harvested from the land trust land, then milled in our sawmill and shingle mill. Labor costs are low because of a large number of volunteers who work with our very lean staff. Any money needed is taken from our Revolving Loan Fund, which is replenished by rents and grants from

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Glenn Larson is a long time participant in Homeworkers Organized for More Employment.

donors. As a result, monthly payments on a home ownership mortgage are very low and are affordable for low-income families. For any rental unit, the rent is set at 20% of the family's income.

At H.O.M.E. we receive a steady flow of used furnishings which we repair and sell at very low cost. These furnishings are available to the families and when required can be obtained at no cost. We have an ongoing "wish list" and ask for donations of these items through our contacts and our publications.

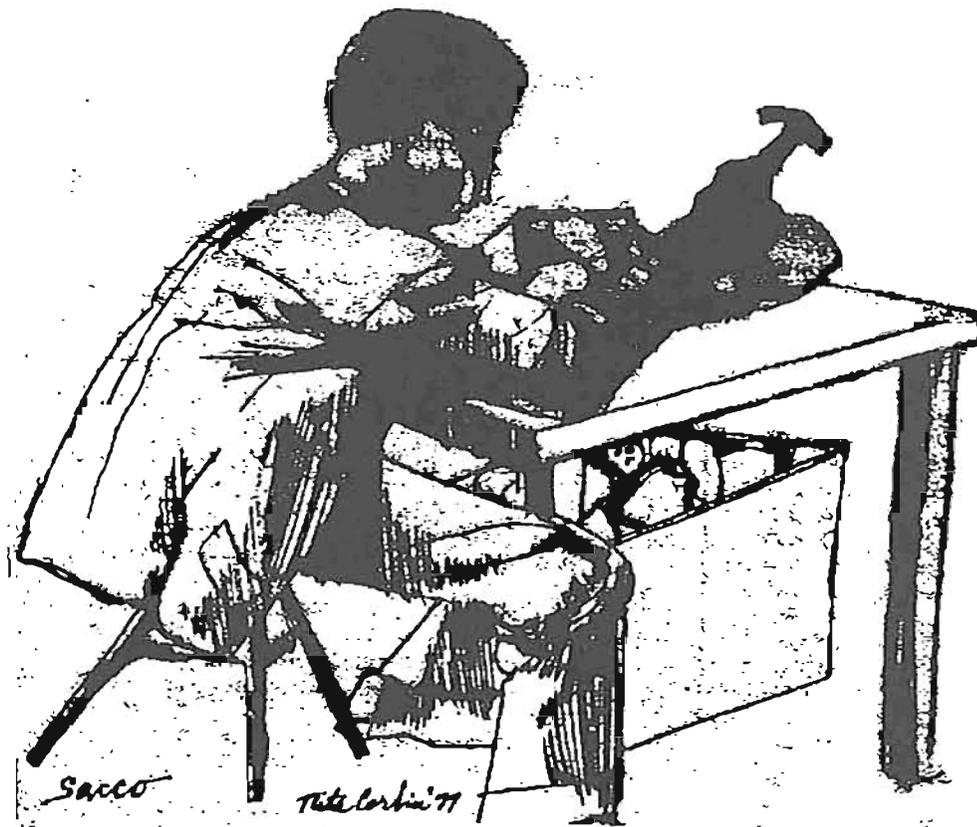
The availability of day care is of inestimable value to a family involved in the process of transitioning to permanent housing. H.O.M.E. has a federally funded (Title XX) day care system in operation on the premises, which is available to families on a sliding scale.

For over twenty years, H.O.M.E. has had a very active educational program. From the beginning it was recognized that education was necessary in the process of raising self-esteem and in empowering the poor and homeless. In addition to literacy training, classes in

crafting and livestock care are offered to aid families in making additional income and in producing food. Over the years the need has grown. In response to those needs the Learning Center has grown to incorporate classes in English as a Second Language, tutoring in literacy and numeracy, classes in Basic Adult Education, tutoring for G.E.D., various craft and work skill workshops. Also, in a post-secondary program called the Rural Education Program, college-level courses are offered. Along with this program in higher-level education, H.O.M.E. is a part of the University of Maine Interactive Television Network. The sense of increasing knowledge is of great value to a family in transition to permanent housing.

H.O.M.E. started and continues to have access to a Free Health Clinic which offers preventive health care to anyone who needs help. This clinic is staffed on a part-time basis by doctors and nurses who voluntarily offer their services.

All of this constitutes H.O.M.E.'s alternative economic system.



# THE ST. LOUIS WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP

by Kim Jayne

*The St. Louis Women's Support Group started sometime around 1989 or 1990 at the Ranken Health Center in the neighborhood east of Kingshighway and just south of Manchester. It began as a gathering of low-income women around soup and social issues. As it evolved, the group focused on personal and spiritual development, and on the economic issues that affect the lives of the group's members. Currently the group has several programs. In the farm-to-city marketing project the women sell pork from Patchwork Family Farms. In their loan program the women form lending circles to support micro-enterprises. In the women's advocacy project they educate and organize around welfare reform issues. In their coalition work, the women join with others to look at the economic crisis and low-income alternatives. At their store-front the women sell the pork products along with jewelry, clothing, pillows, and hats that are made by some of the members. The store-front is located at 5903 Dr. Martin Luther King Dr. and is usually open between 12 noon and 4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturdays. In the following article Kim Jayne describes the St. Louis Women's Support Group's evolution and its vision.*

The St. Louis Women's Support Group has been evolving over the last several years and has been a very slow and often painful process for the women. Oftentimes it has seemed like a wheelbarrow full of frogs, some hopping in at certain times along the road, others hopping out and back in at other times. We have at times focused on our personal development in relationships with men and other family members; at other times we have helped each other in our spiritual development. Many times we have called upon each other for material support and have tried to maintain a loose network that can provide one another with what we need.

We strive to celebrate our diversity. Women who are and have been involved are both black and

white; some have had physical challenges; others have mental and emotional challenges. Most of us do not live in traditional husband, wife, child households. We have had women from religious backgrounds clash with the idea of homosexuality. We work hard at acceptance of one another and even harder at accepting ourselves.

Our farm-to-city marketing project was one of the first income-producing projects we engaged in. We linked up with the Missouri Rural Crisis Center, a group of farmers and rural activists who began to work on economic development for themselves through the formation of a cooperative. Along with the income-producing end of the linkage, we have been working to bring low-income urban folks together with low-income

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Kim Jayne is a founder of the St. Louis Women's Support Group.

Following are some groups that are engaged in an economic enterprise in a way that's not business as usual. Some are cooperatively owned. Many are not, yet all offer economic opportunity and/or development to low-income people.

## FOOD

### Patchwork Family Farms

This is a program of the Missouri Rural Crisis Center whose mission is to preserve family farms, and promote land stewardship and environmental integrity while striving for economic and social justice. Patchwork Family Farms produce pork without using growth hormones, and anti-biotics. They limit the use of chemicals and drugs. Their products can be purchased through the St. Louis Women's Support Group: (314) 383-8861.

### The Women's Bean Project

This project addresses the needs of women who are homeless and living in poverty by offering employment training, education and support while packaging beans (soup mixes) and other healthful food products. Orders can be placed through The Women's Bean Project: 2347 Curtis Street · Denver, Colorado 80205. (303) 292-1919.

### WIPNO Farmer's Market in East St. Louis

This market is part of an economic development project for East St. Louis. It was established last Spring and allows residents to sell goods such as produce, hand-crafts, and bakery items. It is open from May-Oct. and is located on 13th and State Streets in East St. Louis. For information call: Kirk Goodrich (618) 875-9113.

### McMurphy's Grill

This restaurant is owned and operated by St. Patrick's Center (a local agency addressing the needs of the poor and homeless). It serves as a training center for homeless mentally ill individuals. It is open Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and offers box lunches for eat in or carry-out. Private parties are available evenings or weekends. It is located at 614 N. 11th. Phone: (314) 231-3006.

### Blooming Prairie Warehouse

This is a cooperatively owned natural foods distributor. Anyone can form a collective of families to purchase their products. Information: 1-800-323-2131.

### Berger Bluff Farm

This farm operated by Lee and Ingrid Abraham offers organically grown produce by subscription. It is located at: Route L, Box 143, Berger, MO 63014. For information call: (314) 834-5509.

### St. Francis and St. Therese Catholic Worker

This Catholic Worker in Worcester, MA operates the Bread Not Bombs Bakery which offers their hand-made organic product at a price set by the customer. For more information call (508) 753-3588.

## CRAFTS

### Plowsharing Crafts

This is a local not-for-profit store which is operated by the St. Louis Mennonite Fellowship. It is one of more than 100 stores which purchase most of their products from Self-Help Crafts, a Mennonite sponsored program. Self-Help Crafts works with over 30,000 craft-makers and families from 35 countries and assure just prices to artists. The store is located at 6271 Delmar St. Louis, MO 63130 (314) 863-3723.

### SERRV International Handicrafts

This group is a member of the International Federation for Alternative Trade. They offer 1,000 products from 35 developing nations promoting fair trade. To place an order or request a catalogue call: 1-800-423-0071. (Many of their products are also sold at Plowsharing Crafts.)

### Pueblo to People

This group is based on a cooperative model. The group helps craftspeople in Central and South America establish cooperatives and then sells their products. For information or to order a catalogue call: 1-800-843-5257. (Many of their products are also sold at Plowsharing Crafts.)

### The St. Louis Women's Support Group

This group, which is described in more detail in Kim Jayne's article of this issue, operates a storefront at 5903 Dr. Martin Luther King. Jewelry, clothing, re-sale

items, hats, and pillows provided by local women are sold there along with Patchwork Family Farms Pork Products (listed above). For information call: (314) 383-8861.

#### H.O.M.E.

This community is dedicated to economic and social reconstruction. It began in 1970 as an outlet for home worker crafts. It has expanded to include a free health clinic, soup kitchen, food bank, homeless shelters, a learning center with day-care, literacy and GED, alternative High School and college-level programs; job and craft training; pottery, leather, and weaving shops; recovery barn and greenhouse and farmers' market; saw-mill and shingle mill, land-trust and home-building project. For information: (207) 469-7961.

#### *Catholic Worker Cottage Industries:*

##### Sheep Ranch Catholic Worker Farm

At the farm in Sheep Ranch, CA, candles for liturgical and wedding celebrations are made and sold. To place an order or for more information call: (209) 728-2193.

##### Denver Catholic Worker

This Catholic Worker House has a woodworking cooperative and thrift store. The cooperative offers refurbished and newly made furniture as well as simple coffins, bread boards, and prayer benches. It also provides furniture for the homeless as they obtain homes. For information call: (303) 296-6390.

##### Catholic Worker Printery

This cottage industry in Los Osos, CA produces hand-crafted creations, such as: thank you postcards and notes, hand-made prayer cards, rubber stamps, buttons, silk-screened T-Shirts and also provides other printing services. For information or to place an order call: (805)534-1402.

##### Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker

This organic farming community in Malloy, IA makes and promotes handi-crafts and has a community store. For information call: (515) 785-2321.

## FINANCE

##### St. Louis Women's Support Group

This group (listed above) has set up lending circles among its participants. For information call: (314) 383-8861.

##### National Gateway Bank

This bank, owned and managed by African-Americans is located in North St. Louis and provides loans to North-side residents. 3412 Union St. Louis, MO 63115. (314) 389-3000.

##### St. Louis Reinvestment Corporation

This project is a joint venture of three St. Louis area church-based community organizations: C-4 (Churches Committed to Community Concerns), CACI (Churches Allied for Community Improvement), and CUCA (Churches United for Community Action). The project will provide non-traditional loan packages for home ownership and micro-enterprises. For more information call: Phil Minden at (314) 534-3950.

##### R.E.A.P. (The Resident Enterprise Assistance Program)

This program of the City and County Housing Authority offers technical assistance and some financing to residents of public housing to start home-based micro-enterprises. For more information call: William Watson at (314) 534-1818.

## SERVICES

##### Grace Hill's MORE program

This program allows residents of the Grace Hill Neighborhood to participate in a barter system by which neighbors can help one another with needs and services while earning credits for services in return. For information call: (314) 241-2200.

##### Three Men and an Old Lady

This St. Louis lawn mowing enterprise was begun by not-so-old Sue Lauritsen (Karen House founder) along with three young men: Nodric Tankins, Dominic Jones, and Derrick Cartwright. They also hire occasional help from the St. Cronan's neighborhood. They cut lawns, among other odds and ends within their range of skill and equipment. For more information call: Sue Lauritsen at: (314) 531-8404.

##### Gateway to Gardening

This group provides St. Louis low-income families and communities with the resources and support to develop community gardens on vacant city lots. For more information call: (314) 577-9484.

rural folks to understand one another's condition and the causes of our current economic crisis. This too is hard work. The myths we have about one another, whether black or white, rural or urban, are difficult to discuss and then to break down. We have taken kids from the city out to farms for recreation and work. We joined rural women in discussions about economics, racism, sexism and religion. It seems we have been talking for years.

However, when we focus on our commonality as a human race facing environmental, economic, and political crises and as people striving for authentic human development, we eventually find that the barriers of race, lifestyle, gender and geographics are not as large as we once believed.

As we see in Nehemiah, there is a time to sit down and cry and to mourn over the condition of the city. But there is also a time to get up, dust ourselves off, recognize our sins, obsessions, prejudices, insecuri-

ties and incompetencies and ask for help to begin anew. Nehemiah prayed to God to uphold the covenant and grant him success when he went to the leaders for the resources he needed to rebuild the city. He also asked for success when he went to gather the people for work. It was only as a community that the people were able to cry out and be heard by God, and only as a community was the necessary work of rebuilding actually able to be brought into being.

The work with the St. Louis Women's Support Group, as small and minuscule as it may seem, is one of striving hard to simultaneously create a sense of community among low-income people while working for economic survival and development. We are creating a network of people who are ready to work for their own and the community's development. We have different abilities, energy levels and interests, but we are dusting ourselves off and preparing to rebuild.



## GANDHIAN APPROACH FOR WOMEN ON WELFARE

by Monica Hingorani

In this article I will introduce the reader to the Gandhian perspective on economic development for those living in poverty. I will then draw a parallel between the socioeconomic situations of certain women in the U.S. and India, in order to demonstrate the relevance for the women in the U.S. of a Gandhian-inspired solution tried for Indian women.

According to G. Richards (1983), in The Philosophy of Gandhi: A Study Of His Basic Ideas, one aspect of Mahatma Gandhi's economic perspective was the ahimsic (nonviolent) insurgence to the British invasion of the textile industry in India. In this insurgence, Gandhi proposed the production and use of *khadi*, a

home spun cloth. He said that *khadi* served the masses while mill's cloth was intended to serve the classes. In his views, *khadi* served labor, while mill cloth exploited it.

Gandhi linked the wearing of *khadi* to the concept of *swadeshi* which in this context he defined as the determination to find the necessities of life in India, and the use of home produced goods to the exclusion of foreign produced goods when the latter tended to undermine home industries and thereby impoverish the people of India. In proposing the *swadeshi* movement, he realized that Lancashire textile industry may be hurt by the boycott of imported textile for *khadi*, but he said that

Monica Hingorani is from India and currently teaches at MO Western State College.

from the beginning the bargain was to the detriment of the Indians. Hence, it was best that the import be stopped. Not that he had anything personal against the Lancashire textile workers. Yes, he did want to promote *sarvodaya* (the best interest of humanity). But in the current case, he wanted to serve the interest of fellow country persons. Therefore, he would not relinquish the *swadeshi* movement.

Gandhi perceived the primary motivation for the introduction of high-tech machines to be greed on the part of the privileged few rather than an act of philanthropy. According to Gandhi, mass production did not increase the wealth of the country, nor did it ultimately improve every citizen's life. It did produce mass unemployment, no matter how great the increase in the standard of living. Nevertheless, he preferred machinery that saved people from unnecessary labor (e.g., the sewing machine).

In other words, Gandhi was not opposed to industrialization that alleviated poverty, idleness, and misery of the masses. However, he disliked industrialization where the mass production of goods was controlled by a small number of people with the aid of sophisticated machinery. He considered industrialization to be in some respects a curse of humankind since it depended on the ability of producers to exploit the world markets, which resulted in unemployment in the concerned industrial countries. Industrial communities needed to be able to exploit world markets, he explained. They were not primarily concerned with the possible adverse social consequences of their methods of exploitation.

Against this backdrop, Gandhi did want the textile industry to succeed. He would have liked to see the industry succeed in a new guise, that is, to operate as a nationalized industry for the benefit of the society as a whole. In essence, he believed economics and technology that undermined the moral well-being of individuals and the welfare of the people as a whole should be discarded, and economics and technology that considered people should be instituted.

Hence, what was needed, according to Gandhi, were provisions of ideal working conditions and the replacement of the profit motive by humanitarian considerations. Gandhi was advocating a proper perspective of work which neither degraded nor dehumanized people and which showed concern for the quality of life of ordinary people. With these provisions, Gandhi was trying to make the 7,000,000 villages in India self-sufficient units with regard to basic necessities, rather than the sources of wealth for cities in India and Great Britain.

Now, the reader may ask, is the alternative that Gandhi proposed possible in today's high tech, megatrends, mass production context? E.F. Schumacher

(1973), in his book, Small is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered, proposed the alternative that Gandhi preferred. This type of economics is concerned with the quality of life of the people and not as much with the "bottom line." His people-oriented economic theory is derived from his understanding of the meta-economics that takes into account the social, aesthetic, and moral implications of an activity. According to Schumacher, economists must recognize the concept of meta-economics, though this recognition may require a change in their presuppositions about humans and nature.

Gandhi proposed that the people of his country needed to adopt production techniques and methods that were sufficiently cheap to be made available to everyone, and at the same time suitable to be applied on a small scale and consistent with the creative needs of humans. This Gandhian perspective lays the groundwork for the cooperative movement as conceptualized in the Indian context.



Women in India have received a second class citizen status and have been employed in the secondary labor market since time immemorial. They have been exploited in the labor market. Almost 90% of the Indian labor force is employed in the "informal sector," that is, workers have no formal relationship to an employer and are not protected by the national wage and safety laws. Women are heavily represented in this sector in such occupations as cigarette making, laundry, construction and street sweeping.

Some women who have ventured to "make it on their own" have encountered many hurdles. For instance, unfortunately, women living below the poverty line have found it extremely difficult to get even small loans from India's national banks. Hence, they are driven to money lenders who sometimes charge interests over 10% per month.

The plight of women is accentuated by the economic condition of the country. The Britishers undermined the home-based textile weaving in India, in favor

of mass textile production in factories and for import of foreign textile from Lancashire, U.K. According to G. Richards, Gandhi explained that the production of cloth in the textile mills produced a twofold loss for the Indians: the loss of labor that went into the home production of cloth, and the loss of income required to purchase cloth from the mills. Mass production and highly priced Lancashire textiles imported from England created pauperism and impoverished millions of Indians. These characteristics of the economy have contributed to the plight of women in India.

According to M. Reisch (1993) in Confronting the Myths about Welfare, Women in the U.S. on Welfare face the following obstacles:

1. Women are trapped in a "revolving door" of low wages, unemployment, and AFDC. They participate in low-wage jobs, without fringe benefits, with little opportunities for advancement, and no employment security. These jobs may be extremely dehumanizing, demoralizing, and demotivating.

2. 23.5% of the women on welfare are in the system for more than 10 years. It is very difficult for these women to come off the system.

3.. The women on welfare often do not have the opportunities to attain child-rearing, educational advancement and self sufficient employment. Absence of such opportunities coupled with the social stigma attached to the receipt of certain types of government subsidies create the social behavior and the psychological self-concept often labelled by critics of AFDC as "dependency."

4. Many women on welfare want to participate in the workfare programs, but have to wait since there are long waiting lists, such as in the state of California for the GAIN program. Moreover, this disincentive is coupled with the low wage levels offered to those who enter the workplace.

The foregoing complex problem, according to Reisch, cannot be solved by a "single, cost-efficient" social program such as job-training. Besides, it is no secret that some well paying jobs are going abroad to countries that offer cheap labor and favorable tax conditions to multinational businesses. Hence, the job opportunities for the labor market that offer career ladders, self-development opportunities, good benefits etc. are depleted. What is remaining and growing in the U.S. are primarily the jobs with no security, no or minimal benefits, and low pay.

Women on welfare in the U.S. and women living under the poverty line in India who are trying to earn a living share similar experiences. This is due to the fact that the economic environment of India during the British rule and the current U.S. environment have similarities. The aforementioned women in the U.S. and

in India are, and have been, exploited by the industrial sector for cheap labor or are forced to seek jobs in the informal sector due to migration of jobs to other countries. In the case of the U.S., industrial jobs are being exported to some third world countries; in the case of India, under the Britishers, jobs and production was exported to England. Consequently, the dispossessed and underprivileged segment of the population has suffered by not having access to jobs in the formal sector or primary market.

Notwithstanding the problems encountered by working women, particularly those below the poverty line, Indian initiatives have been launched to counteract the hurdles. SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) is an organization for self-employed and home-based women workers. It is based in Ahmedabad, a Western town in India, and has benefited some 20,000 workers. It was founded in 1972 by Mrs. Ela Bhatt, a social worker. It is expanding into satellite sites in the neighboring areas for workers in such exploitative trades as street cleaning and handloom weaving.

This union-cum-cooperative-cum-voluntary-agency, is inspired by Gandhian philosophy. It has freed women from informal labor, in which they are often exploited by contractors. The union has also given women access to low-cost credit. For instance, the SEWA bank builds on the deposits and membership fees of union members, offers loans up to \$1200 to women for purchase of equipment needed for their trades or businesses.

By joining the SEWA organization, women get better wages, working conditions; and it helps their self-respect and independence, rare for women in this male-dominated society. According to R. Kroeber, in an article in The Progressive, the SEWA organization is very useful for developing the social, psychological, and economic well-being of women.

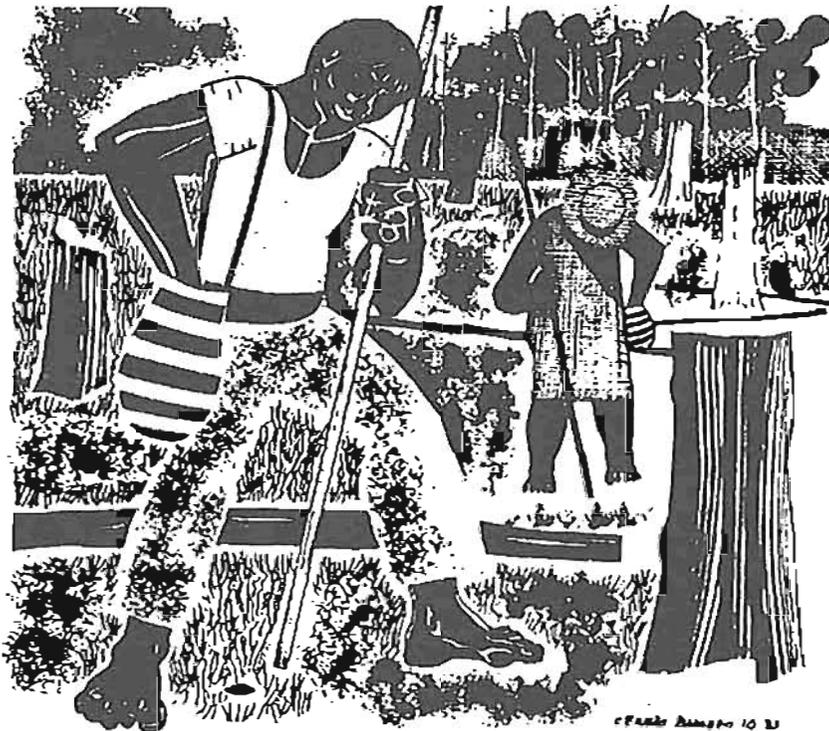
How relevant is the foregoing solution to the women on welfare in the U.S.? Teaching some women on welfare to start cooperative societies in their neighborhoods is one of the many options that could help accomplish some of the objectives of the new Missouri Welfare Reform Act of 1994. At this point Missourians need options and should not limit themselves to the traditional modes of making women self-sufficient: primarily via offering assistance with job training and job finding. Cooperative societies could assist some women on welfare own and run businesses. Teaching and supporting these women to start and run their own businesses in a cooperative fashion will serve two purposes: it will get some of the women off welfare permanently, and it will create economic development. These are the two aims of the new Welfare Reform Bill passed in Missouri in 1994. ✦

# FROM ABROAD



by Bob Corbett

When I left Haiti in March of 1994, PEOPLE TO PEOPLE, (the charity I represent), had 32 functioning development programs. Within three months most of them were shut down and the group leaders in hiding. The intense repression of the Haitian military had driven them underground. Since these projects not only bring economic hope to small villages, but train group leaders in how to better function in and with community democracy, they were seen as "progressive." The leaders were



automatically associated with the Aristide popular movement, which in these cases was a fair assessment.

By October 30th it seemed from here in St. Louis that things had settled down. The U.S. had occupied Haiti and the three leading oppressors, Generals Cedras, Biamby and Colonel Michel were out of the country. Most importantly, Haiti had disappeared from the news, stories of daily atrocities no longer dominated.

In this milieu of hopefulness I sent out letters to the various group leaders announcing that I would be

coming to Haiti on Dec. 21st to re-assess where we were with their projects and to get things rolling once again. However, while the letters were still enroute, on Nov. 4th, the deputy mayor of a small town in central Haiti "came out of hiding." He had been a supporter of Aristide and was immediately assassinated and decapitated, sending a clear message to those in hiding that despite the presence of large numbers of United States troops, Haiti was still quite unsafe for progressive citizens.

The group leaders stayed in hiding, and I have had to postpone my trip to Haiti until its currently re-scheduled date of March 9th. But I am still not sure that even at this late date it will be possible for the group leaders to safely meet with me.

The news media tends to cover Haiti only when there are major disasters going on. It is so easy for us to assume that since Haiti is out of the news and a seemingly benign occupation force is there—and that President Aristide is back in office—that things are well in Haiti.

Bob Corbett in addition to his work with People to People, is a professor at Webster University.

They are not. There is a desperate power struggle going on. President Aristide's term of office will expire on February 7, 1996; and new elections will be held in late 1995, just a short time away. By a constitutional provision in Haiti, he may not succeed himself in office. Thus the question is, can the popular movement of which Aristide is the head, win an election and move Haiti in new and more progressive areas? Unfortunately, it seems that the United States, the most powerful foreign player in Haitian politics, is on the wrong side once again. The U.S. does not side with Aristide, despite all the talk of his having been democratically elected.

The former leaders of Haiti had gone too far in their disregard for world opinion and in their brazen public oppression of supporters of the popular movement. Thus the U.S. severed its relations with them and drove them out of Haiti. But the evidence is quite clear that the U.S. is working with the anti-democratic forces of Haiti, the elite, who have controlled Haiti for the past 190 years, and the military. Aristide and the popular forces are not favored by the U.S., being seen as too nationalistic, socialistic and anti-American. Given the incredible economic and military power of the U.S. in

comparison with Haiti, this position of the U.S. is likely to be the straw that breaks the back of the Haitian popular movement.

My own assessment is that the popular movement of Aristide and his supporters is the most positive force to hit Haiti in the past 190 years. During his short presidency in 1991, Aristide began the process of dismantling the Duvalier dictatorship and putting into place much greater power-sharing and respect for law and democratic procedure. Americans who want to see Haiti progress beyond the misery that it has known for too too long, would do well to side with President Aristide and his movement, and inform their representatives in Washington of their hopes and demands that the U.S. change its policy and stop supporting forces of repression in Haiti.

Jean-Bertrand Aristide once defined the aim of his presidency to move Haiti from misery to poverty. Such a gain would be monumental for Haiti. Instead, and in great measure as a result of U.S. policy in Haiti, the country has been moving from misery into absolute desperation. If a turnabout is not achieved soon, Haiti faces complete catastrophe. ✦

# FROM KAREN HOUSE



by Annjie Schiefelbein

"We come to share our story, we come to break the bread.

We come to know our rising from the dead."(David Haas; Song of the Body of Christ.)

In the summer of 1992, I sat in a little room on the first floor of the Karen House called the Quiet Room. I sat on a couch across from Teka, listening to a story about a young woman who had decided to make a difference. I had no idea on that day how many times the story of Dorothy Day had fallen across the hallways

of that three story house. (I also had no idea I'd spend that day cleaning the products of a malfunctioning toilet, but that is another story.) Everyone who enters this house, from students doing service projects to potential volunteers to guests, hears a little of Dorothy's life and work: a little of Dorothy's story. The story that is, I suppose, told over and over again at all of the Catholic Worker houses around the world. Her story is our original binding force and constant connection. But to tell you the truth, had hers been the only story I heard

Annjie Schiefelbein goes hiking with her dog Hogan.

that first day, I am not certain I would have come back. But there were other stories that day. Regretfully, I cannot remember the names of any of the guests with whom I spoke, but I remember their stories. They told me stories of their lives, passions, difficulties, and joys. They allowed me into their lives so simply and gracefully. Theirs are the stories that brought me back.

There is something so holy about sharing a story, taking a piece of your life and choosing to share it with another person. Personal stories can be so tremendously different in detail, but so very similar in emotion. Stories are what connect us and keep us rooted to each other. Stories abound here in the house—so many people provide a variety of life experiences. Ordinary time on Sunday night is a chance for the stories of former and present community members and friends to tell the story of Karen House. They tell the story of the House by telling their own; their experiences with the house, with other community members, with guests, etc. Some stories bring hysterical laughter, encouraging other stories of humor or irony; others bring only ponderous silence, others anger, others fear.

The guests have their many stories as well. The guests often, for me, break the boundaries of what I would consider a tolerable way of life. But even with the differences between the way my life has been and the way a guest's life may have been, there is still a connection formed by the telling of those lives. We've both known heartbreak, we've both known joy. We've both been humiliated as well as raised up. The specifics are so very different, but the emotion so much the same. I am so humbled by how connected we all are, despite my attempts to separate my experience or pain from that of anyone else—it is not so much my experience as it is the human experience. That connection brings me a choice: I can keep my story within me, and disunite myself from others, or I can share my story and accept the connection already present; already given to us. The same choice is present when I am being offered a story, being offered the experience of another.

Karen House really has her own story. Her story has been shaped and formed by the multitude of people who have passed through her doors. Heard all at one time, the stories are almost overwhelming to behold. Any given moment at Karen House provides too many stories of despair in the forms of abuse, addiction, and violence. At times it seems as if these stories take on a life of their own. They grow like weeds threatening to choke the life from the joy that lives also within the life of the house. It is then, hopefully, that we consciously choose to recognize both, and not to be blinded by the apparent abundance of one over the other; they are both reality. Right now in the house, joy comes to life in the forms of three newborns (well almost three; two and one

we hope will appear very soon). Joy comes to life in the form of guests who have made the choice to not use drugs for today—and that today turning into months. Joy comes to life in the stories of community members looking at our own lives and making decisions about how to live best the lives that were given to us, even if those decisions mean facing transition and fear.



Joy comes in the moments of my story when I am given unrequested but needed encouragement by one of the many with whom I live. Joy comes in the form of unadulterated silliness that drowns away the occasional bleakness. It may sound strange to some, but a good community wrestling match brought on by the simple act of tickling sustains me as much as anything else. Joy comes in the shape of moments of silence, when we are given the grace of stepping out of our lives so that we may see them with more affectionate and compassionate eyes.

The joy is a chosen and necessary part of the story of the house. It is born of a hope that our work is fruitful, even when we do not see results. It is born of a hope that promises, as Merton suggested, that even our desire to please God is pleasing to God. It is joy born of a hope and belief in our very foolish and big God, loving us beyond our understanding. That is the story; the story of the living God into whom we submerge ourselves by sharing the Eucharist together. It is the story of that God in which our stories begin, endure, and end. It is our hope that our own stories reflect even a bit of the story of the God of peace who walks with us, sharing God's own story as we share ours. It is there, in the telling of the stories, that we are able to see the holiness of ourselves and those around us. It is in the sharing of our stories that we break the bread of our lives with each other. It is in the sharing of our stories that we truly can see a rising from our deaths. It is a choice to share what has already been given to us as a gift by our God of experience, life and stories. †

# FROM LITTLE HOUSE



by Mary Ann McGivern, S.L.

I finally got a copy of Mev Puleo's The Struggle is One: Voices and Visions of Liberation the week before Christmas. I started reading it in the airport on Christmas night. I've read slowly, studying all the pictures, finishing one person's conversation and setting the book aside, picking it up the next day, looking again at the photos or perhaps rereading the poetry, and then reading the next interview.

Mev's account of sixteen Brazilians immersed in the struggle for justice is a straight-forward presentation of each person's experience while destitute in the *favela*; a broom-maker, a grandmother poet; a student theologian with a sick baby; a silenced theologian; a bishop. But Mev's own delight in the conversations shines through and they sparkle with intellectual verve and compassion.

Each person's story evokes joy in me because they all openly discuss their faith, not as theory, but as wellspring, roots, and the very ground they walk on. Their theological understanding of God and Church shapes their lives and informs their daily prayer and work and friendships. That's true of you and me, too, but we don't speak about it much. The talk in every chapter of The Struggle is One satisfies me, like a delicious meal or vigorous exercise.

In his interview, Leonardo Boff says, "Theology alone doesn't convince anyone. Only those words which are pregnant with action, theology that is born of suffering, of struggles, of the poor--this theology is a testimony. This theology leads to conversion." (p. 169) Mev's book is a collection of that kind of testimony, and it can serve as a model, helping us share our stories of conversion.

Accompanying the interviews are photographs of the subjects, mostly standing, directly facing the camera, smiling. Mev's choice of these posed photos over candid action shots is deceptively simple. She allows us to look straight into their faces as we read directly into their hearts.

Beyond each personal account, the interviews have common themes: the relationships between people and the hierarchy; economic and environmental justice; the role of women; the role of the middle class; the role of the United States. It's in that discussion of the U.S. role that Carlos Mesters says, "The struggle is one--we're not enemies in this!" and Tereza Cavalcanti says, "We share the same struggle."

Mev conducted these interviews in Portuguese in the fall of 1990. She says that "each person generously granted me full permission to translate, edit, and employ a creative style of presentation. It is difficult to convey the lyrical quality of the human voice, the ebb and flow of conversation. People don't speak in paragraphs or outlines! I have tried to present the material in a way that is faithful to the spirit of each person. I hope the photographic images add texture of the voices."

In other words, the artistry of The Struggle is One did not happen by chance. Mev has crafted particular accounts of Brazilians' work to build God's realm. They glow with humor and passion and give us heart to keep doing our own work.

The Struggle is One is published by the State University of New York Press (1994). You can order it from Catholic Supply for about \$20. (Paul's Books told me they would have to add an extra \$8 in surcharges.)

Mev grew up in St. Louis, attended St. Louis University, taught one year at Visitation Academy, and volunteered at Cass House starting in her high school days. Many of us count her as a friend. She is struggling now against brain cancer. We are praying for her cure, seeking the intercession of other friends, Ann Manganaro, Dorothy Day, and Archbishop Romero. Mev's particular struggle for healing is also our struggle.



Mary Ann McGivern, SL is still a gardener. She was delighted to see a picture in Mev's book of Rubem Alves' jaboticaba fruit tree.

A poem  
by Elmira Taliaferro

- K is for the Kindness received from the workers there.  
For a homeless person, it's a good feeling to know someone does care.
- A is for the Agencies we refer them to for their use.  
It may be to help with housing or dealing with drug abuse.
- R is for the Relapse some of the women go through.  
It's painful being homeless and being addicted too.
- E is for the Expenses taken care of by donations  
given with love by people who want to help our financial situations.
- N is for the New Faces we see as they come and go.  
Sometimes it's sad to see one leave, but soon a new face will show.
- H is for the Hope we begin to see in the eyes of the women  
as they attempt to better their tragic lives.
- O is for the Onward struggle we strive to put in the past.  
We're losing because although we fight  
Being Homeless continues to last.
- U is for the Uncertainty of the battle ever being won.  
For being homeless is on the rise, the list goes on and on.
- S is for the Sharing of minds.  
For there are those who feel as we do that being homeless  
must end. It's become a big issue.
- E is for the Encouragement we receive from our God above.  
Frustration and disappointment at times overwhelm us, but we  
get through it with God's love.

TOGETHER THE WORDS SPELL A PLACE WHERE A MIND RECEIVES REST.  
FOR WHILE YOU ARE LIVING AT KAREN HOUSE YOU ARE NO LONGER  
HOMELESS!

Elmira Taliaferro was a guest at Karen House and a great support to all.

by Mark Scheu

During the recent November election campaign, apart from attacking one's opponent with any conceivable charge, one theme was most commonly used to draw votes: the appeal to retribution. First, I was amused by the utter crassness by which one candidate would denounce another because he or she was not sufficiently severe in meting out punishment toward a convicted criminal. It seemed but a caricature of what a campaign should be about. But I was quickly sobered by the frequency and increasing baseness of these appeals. It was as if everyone was running for the same office — not a legislative seat, but state executioner! Whenever an opponent had some qualms or reasoned limitations on the imposition of the death penalty, the other candidate would seize the opportunity to denounce this seeming coddler of criminals.

Apparently the managers of these campaigns had done their research well. Many were not scandalized or dismayed but captured by these techniques to garner their votes by appealing not to our hopes, our needs, or common reason, but to our fears and dark desires for revenge. One sees the same reflex reaction candidly revealed daily in news stories about crime. Reporters routinely interview individuals (who may or may not be connected with the victim of the crime) to elicit an opinion as to how the perpetrator should be dealt with, if apprehended. The responses are frightening — in some cases more than the crime itself. I recall one individual reacting to the case where a divorced and distraught mother had drowned her two children in a lake (allegedly because her boyfriend did not want to be a father) by stating openly without compunction that this woman should be slowly tortured to death. The prosecutor in this case, incidentally, has now vowed to seek her death in the electric chair (apparently this is the closest thing to torture that South Carolina law provides for).

This cry for vengeance on the perpetrators of crime, once regarded as irrational and vicious, has become common, widespread, and respectable. The desire for retribution is not one I am personally unfamiliar with. It is indeed my gut response to any injustice which

I observe to which I can assign a perpetrator. At Karen House when I observe one child strike another I often want to hit the offender in return, saying, "There, how does that feel?" But I have never surrendered to this impulse. Not only is it wrong to strike a child, but I also realize that this only demonstrates that the bigger force rules and can strike with impunity.

I subscribe to the belief that individuals are responsible for what they do. If a drug addict robs and kills in order to satisfy a narcotic urge, the addiction does not excuse the crime. Yet, in view of the high crime rate in our society, in view of the quick resort to violence, in view of the prevalence of crime among youth, surely this betokens a breakdown in society of some kind. Crimes are not committed in a vacuum; there are certain social, economic, cultural, and moral conditions which give rise to crime. There are root causes for the social collapse of a people. Yet our remedy to crime is to "lock 'em up," not to give them jobs, security, a place in society, dignity.

Would it not behoove us to examine these causes? Do we seriously expect to correct this situation by merely punishing the criminal more severely and more assuredly? Although I agree that society needs to be protected from the violent, is punitiveness going to put things right? With the largest per capita prison population in the world, how can one maintain that punishment deters crime? And what of those we consign to the violent environment of prison (most of whom are poor and nonviolent offenders)? Are we prepared to write off such a large segment of our population? With the recently popular "three strikes and you're out" approach we seem headed in that direction. (A man in California may run afoul of this ruling for having stolen a piece of pizza!)

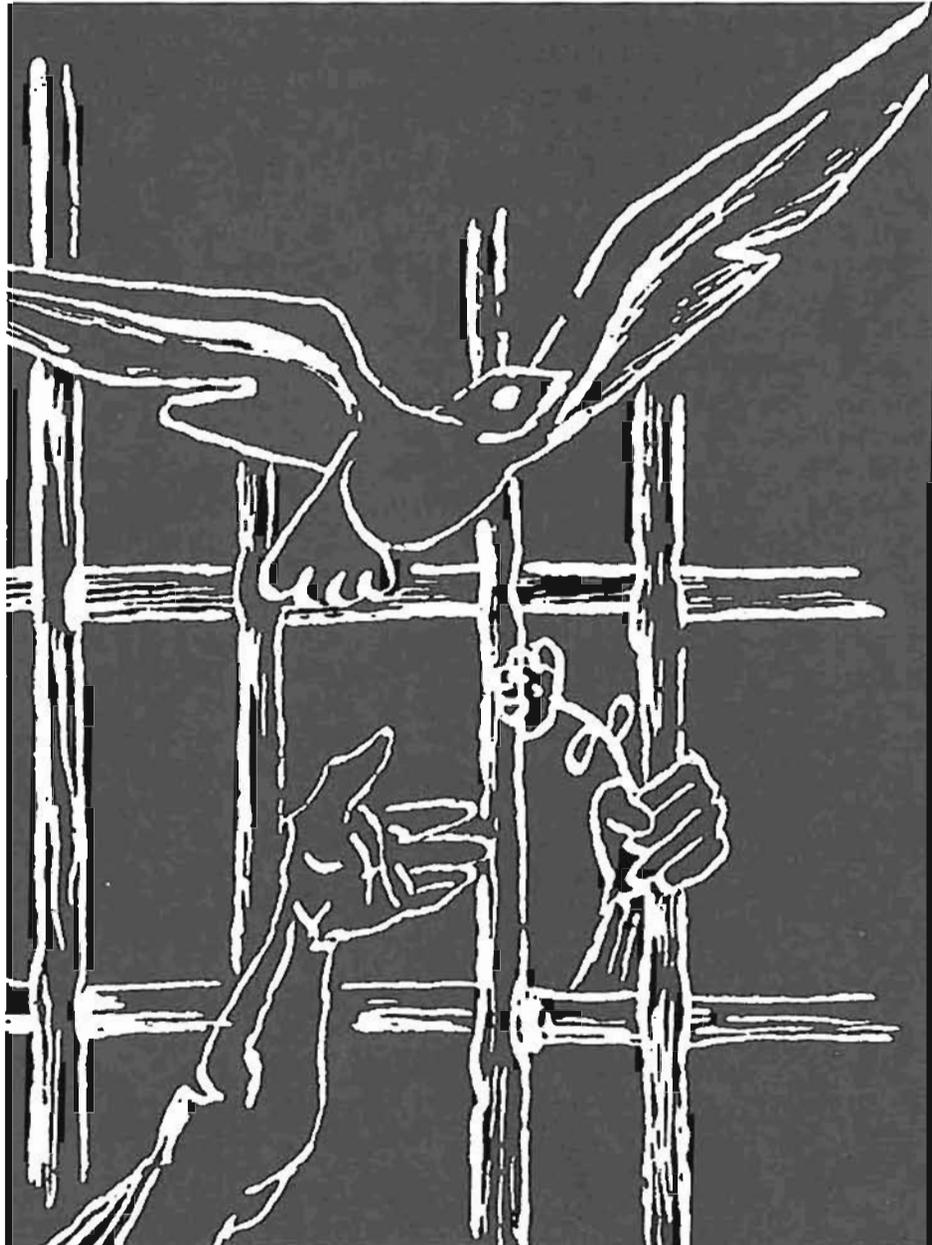
What is most astonishing is that the same people who emerge from church on Sunday are more often than not the very same so ready to call down retribution on the criminal on Monday. I often wonder, are we reading the same holy book? Are we praying to the same Savior? Don't mistake me — I make no pretense of abstaining

Mark Scheu is a regular rider on Metro Link.

from sin – my sins are “like scarlet” to be sure. But it is crucial that when one fails to follow the Gospel call to nonviolence, to forgiveness, to reconciliation, to compassion, one must fall down in repentance and rely upon God’s mercy and grace, not upon self-justification and denial. In *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV* Dostoevsky dramatically makes the point that each of us is capable of the most dastardly, foul, cruel crime. Each of us. The most vicious crime. We are all fallen; we are all sinners. Given the wrong circumstances, each of us is capable of

choosing hatred over love. Who are we, then, to condemn another?

Ultimately we must realize that Jesus was condemned as a criminal. He was thrown in prison, tortured, and executed by the state. They used crosses instead of electric chairs or injections or nooses. It is true that we are not called to be victims, but nor are we called to be executioners. We are called to be disciples, to be followers along The Way.



## No Recourse by Peter Maurin

1. Politicians used to say:  
"We make prosperity  
through our wise policies."
2. Business people used to say:  
"We make prosperity  
through our private enterprise."
3. The workers did not have anything to say  
about the matter;
4. They were either put to work  
or thrown out of employment;
5. And when unemployment came  
the workers  
had no recourse  
against the professed makers  
of prosperity  
politicians and business people.



### House needs:

- ♦ Silverware
- ♦ Food
- ♦ House takers
- ♦ Beds and other furniture

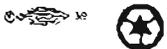
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Karen Catholic Worker House  
1840 Hogan ■ St. Louis, MO. 63106



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