

New Options

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Our Schools Need Imagination More Than They Need Money

Typically, "progressives" and change agents have demanded *more money* for social programs. But today it's clear that the *way we do things* needs to change—and that if things were done more appropriately, more humanely, more intelligently, we might end up spending *less* on social programs than we do now.

Take education. Over the last 25 years, the number of students enrolled in our elementary and secondary schools has varied very little (from a high of 51 billion in 1970 to a low of 44 billion in 1985). But we spent \$30 billion on elementary and secondary education in 1966; \$72 billion in 1975; and \$159 billion in 1986.

That means spending on education has increased *more than one and one-half times as fast as inflation* since 1965. And what have we gotten in return? A generation's worth of declining test scores. A report by the educational establishment itself that concludes, "The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people" (*A Nation at Risk*, 1983).

The Democratic party thinks it knows how to turn things around. In its 1988 platform it calls for (surprise, surprise) spending even more on education—the same kind of education we have now. There isn't even a *hint* that the *ways we educate* our children might be part of the problem!

According to the Democrats' logic, the problem isn't with the educational system but with us. We're so damn greedy. We're just not willing to spend what it takes.

The new reformers

Over the last 10 years or so, a handful of education reformers have operated by a different sort of logic. They've come up with exciting new ideas for changing the ways our schools are administered, the ways our children are taught, and the kinds of things they're taught.

And *nearly all their ideas would cost no more than our current practices cost*. Some would ac-

tually save us money!

Despite their concern that their proposals be cost-effective, the new education reformers can hardly be characterized as conservative. They tend to borrow equally from the moods and movements of the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Their key words and phrases transcend left and right: choice, diversity, empowerment, learning styles, children helping children, education with production, learning to learn.

We talked with many of these reformers over the last few months, including directors of the two most exciting education-reform organizations in the country: the Center for Collaborative Education in New York City and New Horizons for Learning in Seattle. Among them they stressed 12 key proposals. What follows is an attempt to pull those proposals together, the first such attempt we've seen.

Do we have an education reform *program* here, one that can take us beyond the structurelessness of 60s-style efforts and the "new traditionalism" of today? (Note to systemic thinkers: the first four proposals below relate to teaching, the next four to administration, the last four to curriculum.)

Deregulate teaching

One of the first things the new reformers would do is deregulate the teaching profession . . . making it possible for people to teach in our schools without teaching certificates.

"There are not many teachers in the public schools whom I think of as knowledgeable people," John McKnight told NEW OPTIONS. McKnight is director of community studies at the Center for Urban Affairs, Northwestern University, and co-author of *Disabling Professions* (1977).

"If you asked, Does the average physician know some significant medical procedures and methods?, I'd have to say yes. If you asked, Does the average electrician know something methodologically significant?, I'd have to say yes.

"But the professional qualifications of the teacher are the least significant around. The teachers' degree has more hokum associated with it than that of any other profession, and teachers' schools are looked down upon at every college of education. Why? Because what they have to offer, methodologically, is so insignificant.

"Training in pedagogy should not be a requirement for someone to be associated with young people. [Instead] I'd have us ask a wonderful question: Whom do we want our children to be learning from?"

Empower teachers

Another idea the new reformers are talking about would shake the profession up just as much: Give teachers a lot more control over *what* and *how* they teach.

"One of the reasons I think teachers are frustrated and dissatisfied is they feel powerless," Mary Ellen Sweeney, co-editor of *Holistic Education Review* (#54), told NEW OPTIONS.

"Teachers [know best, and it's teachers who] should be making decisions about kids, about the curriculum, about the goals of the school. State mandates should be waved—what works in one town doesn't necessarily work in another. . . .

"[If teachers become decision-makers,] they'll experience fewer discipline problems with kids, because they'll be able to engage them in interesting and worthwhile work.

"And teachers will have the potential to grow more as individuals. They'll be able to develop and expand upon their areas of interest. And that will attract [a different sort of person into public school teaching]. . . ."

Peer tutoring

When we reviewed Frank Riessman's stimulating anthology, *The New Populism* (#34), we neglected to tell you that he's best known as co-founder of the "peer movement"

in education (peer tutoring, peer counselling, etc.); currently he's director of the Peer Research Laboratory at The Graduate School, City University of New York.

Riessman thinks kids can often be their own best teachers. "Kids talk to kids much more readily than they talk to adults," he told NEW OPTIONS. "So what we do in our work [at the Peer Lab] is try to set up approaches in school systems where everybody has a chance to play the tutor role.

"That breaks away from the remedial, I'm-helping-you kind of approach. In most cases today the 'more advanced' kids tutor the 'less advanced' kids. That makes the receiver feel 'I need help!' rather than, 'I need help for the moment but I can give somebody else help tomorrow.'

"But if I'm in the sixth grade I can be tutoring fourth grade; if I'm in the fourth grade I can be tutoring second grade; and so on down to kindergarten. Even within a grade you can train half the class to tutor the other half part of the time, then reverse it.

"[Under this system], the tutor is the one who benefits most from the tutoring! The tutor gets a great deal of benefit from preparing the material, playing the tutor role, and feeling good about themselves."

Like many new-style education reformers, Riessman thinks peer tutoring should be used much more extensively in the future. "One [recent study] compared peer tutoring with computer-assisted learning, longer school days and smaller class size. It found that peer tutoring was far more cost-effective than any of those other approaches. There's also [evidence for massive increases in] feelings of empowerment and democratic and cooperative attitudes."

Co-teaching

Many new reformers would have *other adults* help out, as well. Andy LePage, author of *Transforming Education* (#46), is one of our most persistent and effective advocates of volunteer teacher programs.

"If teachers are willing to share their power," LePage told NEW OPTIONS, "and to recognize they can be so much more effective when someone else puts another angle to something—then they are going to welcome the idea of *co-teaching*. This is where [a non-teacher] shares in the teaching of a subject they both care about.

"For example, suppose someone in my town has spent 30 years putting together a Civil War collection and really understands that period well and has maybe been a curator at a museum or something. For me to say, Gee, I'm gonna teach this whole section on the Civil War—when I have that extraordinary person right nearby—is kind of ludicrous.

"Now, who are these [potential co-

teachers]? I believe they're all around us.

"There are all kinds of *experts in the field* [who'd be glad to volunteer their time]. A broadcaster can come in and do a section on communications. A psychologist can come in and do a section on listening skills. . . . There are *senior citizens*. There are *former teachers, clergypersons, business folks*. Then there are the *hands-on people*. Cooks. Forest rangers. People from the symphony. . . ."

Open enrollment

Nearly all the new reformers believe parents should be able to decide where they'll send their kids to school. That's why they favor open enrollment. But they're also sensitive to the racial issue, so their support for open enrollment hinges on certain other conditions being met.

One of the most sophisticated documents on this whole subject was recently produced at Oakland University (OU) in suburban Detroit. Called "Schools of Choice," it was written by OU's Project to Access Choice in Education (PACE) and published by Detroit's non-profit Metropolitan Affairs Council. James Clatworthy, an associate dean at OU, was the gray eminence behind the document.

"The term 'open enrollment' dates back to the late 60s," Clatworthy told NEW OPTIONS. "It can be defined as the freedom for families to choose the full-time public school of attendance. . . ."

"Early open enrollment plans appear to have been motivated by the desire to counteract mandated school desegregation orders. This type of open enrollment is not based on sound educational motives. . . ."

"When people talk about 'schools of choice,' most of the time they're just talking about open enrollment. PACE was an attempt to define choice [in a socially responsible way]. And the PACE team defined it as not *just* open enrollment, but as teacher empowerment and [school and program] diversity.

"Where all three exist, there's [significant choice]—and better learning outcomes for students."

Diverse schools

All the new reformers celebrate the increasing ethnic, racial and cultural diversity in America's public schools. And all would endorse the PACE report when it says, "Student diversity, however, is often unmatched by programmatic diversity. . . ."

"Students are better and more enthusiastic learners when they are able to choose [schools and programs] compatible with their [interest areas and] learning styles. Open classrooms, cooperative learning, cross-age grouping, block time, Montessori, and gifted-talented are [some examples of] strategies that meet the needs of different students."

"The real key to choice, I think, is programmatic diversity," Clatworthy told NEW OPTIONS. "That means encouraging schools to offer special programs that all students in the district can select if they meet the requirements. Encouraging schools if they want to create an arts school or a school where [the bulk of the] curriculum is related to environmental awareness. Allowing schools to have different mission statements. . . ."

"We're even talking now about allowing each school to develop its programmatic diversity through a special charter. [First off, the charter would have] students, parents and teachers get together and *define* what they'd like the school to be. . . ."

Smaller schools

One of the students accused in the Central Park "wilding" attack attends Central Park East Secondary School, where noted educator Deborah Meier is the principal; and in a press interview in Washington earlier this month Meier called for breaking up the bigger public schools. "The advantage of a small unit is that you can talk to kids as people you know, listen to them, respond to their fears and confusions, help them understand that ideas matter."

For more on the subject of breaking up the bigger schools, Meier referred us to her friend Heather Lewis, director of the Center for Collaborative Education (described below).

"I think schools work well when the people in them can all sit around a table together," Lewis told NEW OPTIONS. "[You don't want to have to] keep setting up representative committees.

"Another reason [we favor small schools] is I don't think you can disconnect size from autonomy. And a school that's small is *able* to make decisions about curriculum, organization, students, etc., without being told from the top down what to do. . . ."

"Having smaller schools is different than [just

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Groups

putting schools into smaller buildings]. To break down a school into smaller units that continue to respond to one centralized administrator and are required to fulfill top-down mandates and so forth—that's no real change.

"Finally, when you have a smaller school you [often have] a real school *community*."

Democratic classrooms

All the new reformers would introduce democracy into the classroom—as revolutionary a concept there as it is in China, unfortunately.

Linda MacRae-Campbell is an enthusiastic proponent of classroom democracy. She makes her living as an international consultant on "holistic teaching methods" and is developing a new model of teacher education at Antioch University West based on such methods.

"We are living in a democratic society," she told us from her home near Seattle. "And we expect our students to grow up and function in it as informed citizens. And yet, in most classrooms, the democratic process is not enacted!"

"This is something we need to look at. We need to give students an opportunity for some self-determination in their learning activities. And we need to let them work as a group and make some group decisions.

"The school climate breeds competition and isolation among students. Schools use the 'bell curve' which means some students will excel and others will necessarily fail.

"Research has shown that this kind of competitive attitude is actually destructive of achievement. We need to move more into working with cooperative and collaborative processes, so students become better used to working together as a team."

Learning styles

Dee Dickinson, founder and president of New Horizons for Learning (described below), feels there's a gap between traditional teaching methods and the needs of kids in school today.

"It is no longer possible to teach 'down the middle of the road' and expect that everybody's going to get it," Dickinson told NEW OPTIONS. "Most teachers teach the way *they* best learn—which does not necessarily reach the majority of kids in the classroom."

Worse, most teachers teach passively, "which means kids in their seats listening to information being poured in a funnel through the top of their heads, right?" The most destructive result of the passive—"intellectual" teaching style: the growing conviction, on the part of many in our society, that many kids just can't learn very well.

One of the key tenets of the new education reformers is that, in Dickinson's words, "there isn't anybody who can't learn." All that's needed is to develop different teaching styles for different learners.

Much of the groundwork has already been laid, Dickinson told NEW OPTIONS. "Two crucial people have [proposed] an expanded view of intelligence. . . . Their two theories will be the basis of the new schools of the future.

"One is Robert Sternberg of Yale. In his book *The Triarchic Mind* (1988) he points out that there are [not one but three] kinds of intelligence. *Componential* intelligence is the kind that can be tested by an IQ test. The others are *contextual*, the kind you use in creating new environments, and *experiential*, a practical or street-smarts kind of intelligence.

"Only the first kind of intelligence shows up on standardized tests. And yet, it is the contextual and experiential intelligences that are now being demanded by the workplace!

"The other person is Howard Gardner of Harvard, who wrote a book called *Frames of Mind* (1983). He talks about at least seven kinds of intelligence in that book.

"He talks about verbal and mathematical-logical intelligence, okay? That's the same as Sternberg's componential intelligence. But there's also visual-spatial; bodily-kinesthetic; musical; interpersonal (i.e., able to work cooperatively with other people); and intrapersonal (understanding more about our inner world)."

For the new reformers, the implications of these theories are both obvious and profound. "We never tap into most intelligences," Dickinson told us, and *that's* why most students fail to learn. "We give kids athletic scholarships in college, kids with high kinesthetic intelligence, and then we force them to learn in the classroom by sitting and listening to lectures! . . .

"[In the future] teachers will have to be innovative and utilize a large number of [teaching] strategies. [We'll want to use] art and music and dance and drama throughout the curriculum as ways to reach these other kinds of intelligence. . . ."

Peace education

A number of new reformers have written books or articles or "curricula" on peace or global education. But Ruth Fletcher's book *Teaching Peace: Skills for Living in a Global Society* (1986) is special.

Talk about holism, its 64 chapters—written for teachers of elementary and junior high school kids—cover not just "the threat of nuclear war," but conflict resolution (mediation, "active listening," etc); "structural violence" (racism, sexism, poverty, etc.); "whole earth system" (basic human needs, scarce resources, "responsible consumerism," etc.); and much, much more.

We tracked Fletcher down—she turns out to be a regional minister for the Northwest Regional Christian Church, based in Seattle—and asked her why she cast her net so broadly.

"A lot of the Educators for Social Responsibility stuff has to do with just the nuclear issue," she replied. "[But] the central issue for me is violence.

"Now, most people will define violence as only physical violence. I like to use a broader definition. Anytime you do harm, you know, that's an act of violence. So poverty can be [considered] violence; racism and sexism can be considered violence. . . ."

There a sense in which Fletcher feels even her own book falls short. "All the [peace curricula] I've seen seem to focus on content; you know, let's teach kids how to solve conflicts in the classroom, or let's teach multicultural education. Kids don't [really get that] violence is *everywhere*: it's on TV, it's in their textbooks, it's in the culture.

"So if we're going to teach peace, we have to make it more than book-learnin'. [Peace] has to be [embedded in all] the processes that are used in the classroom—like, are the students included in the processes?"

Education with production

Chris Hennin is, among other things, a young Turk at the World Bank, an expert on Third World self-help, and an integral part of an international network pushing for something called "education with production" (EWP).

"There are lots of different kinds of EWP programs," Hennin told NEW OPTIONS. "But basically, they all incorporate productive activities into the academic program. They all link learning with productive work."

In elementary and secondary schools in North America, that basically means getting kids to grow their own food; getting them to prepare and market it; and getting them to clean and maintain their school buildings.

"I think there's nothing more educational than growing things," Hennin told us, "simply because kids have an opportunity to see life transform itself. And they become aware of the fragility of life. . . ."

"I think disagreeable tasks like [carrying the garbage or] cleaning toilets should be done by all the kids. So they'll [learn to be] more conscious and responsible. . . ."

"All the time I hear the argument that, if kids work, it takes away from their academic concentration. But what I've found is that, if you give kids the opportunity to work at real things, it *stimulates* their intellect.

"Animals are self-sustaining at maturity, and I think humans have the same inherent need."

Learning to learn

For the new reformers, the goal of schooling is *not* the inculcation of "information" or even "knowledge," but what they call "learning to learn." It's a slippery concept, but you know it when it's happened.

"For me, learning to learn is learning to *sustain* [the act] of learning," Ruben Nelson told NEW OPTIONS. Nelson's Post-Industrial Future Project recently published a working paper called "Learning to Learn—The Key to Our Future."

"[Ideally], learning to learn becomes a reflexive, self-critical exercise that is self-generating. . . . One of the critical requirements is that you ask yourself rude questions. And that you ask the world rude questions. But always from the point of view of psychological security. . . .

"When you're at the stage of learning to learn, you can learn in any situation. You can read a thoroughly bad book and learn an immense amount from it! You can listen to bad lectures and learn as much from them as good ones.

"Learning to learn is an attitudinal set that pervades [everything]. The heart of it is the intellectual-emotional-spiritual journey toward maturity. . . . [So to teach it] you've got to have teachers that are far more mature than the present crop."

The resistance

To some of you, what we've written above may seem as "controversial" as mom and apple pie. So it's important to remember how the real world sees it. Virtually every interest group in the education profession is opposed to most of what we've written. So is much of American culture.

"The resistance is systemic," Linda MacRae-Campbell told NEW OPTIONS. Just consider:

- "Our major *teacher training institutions* are [25 years behind the times]," MacRae-Campbell said. "They don't teach teachers how to deal with the different kinds of intelligence in the classroom. They don't teach teachers how to deal with emotional issues in the classroom. . . ."

- "The *school boards* don't want to give teachers more power," James Clatworthy said. "They don't want teachers telling administrations what's good for students. And they don't want teachers entering policy areas that they feel is 'their' responsibility."

- "The resistance comes from the *principals*, who have a hard time giving up control," Heather Lewis said. "They are used to running their schools a certain way and are unwilling to grant any kind of autonomy to teachers."

- "Most *teachers* are unwilling to share their power [with students and with adult co-teachers]," Andy LePage said. "They're going to have to recognize that they have that need."

- "The *people* are impatient, they want results now," Dee Dickinson said. "And what people can get results on now is seeing that kids have memorized information."

- "Our deepest block is *cultural*," Ruben Nelson said. "We've got to recognize how the

culture we've all grown up in is a culture that didn't want us to grow up very much. It needed us to be more mature than children but less mature than fully mature adults, and it dumps on teachers who are mature enough to instill real independence in kids."

The vacuum

The new education reformers have plenty of bright ideas, but few organizations that can take those ideas into the mainstream, let alone fight for them there.

Probably the most competent idea-dissemination organization is Dee Dickinson's New Horizons for Learning, based in Seattle. A non-profit membership organization, it sponsors talks, workshops, seminars, conferences (see NEW OPTIONS #48), and a 16-page quarterly newsletter that can keep you up to date on the new reformers—and on how their ideas are faring in the profession.

The most promising organization of new-reform schools is Heather Lewis's Center for Collaborative Education in New York City. "We've organized a network of [new-reform] public schools," Lewis told us, "and we're constantly adding schools as well as [providing assistance to administrators, teachers and parents] who are interested in either starting [such] schools or in starting programs *within* schools that share a similar philosophy to ours."

Despite these organizations and some others, the gap between potential and reality is very, very wide now. Before we see substantial movement in the direction of teacher empowerment, smaller schools, education with production, etc., we may first have to see a change in the values and goals of the larger society. Which is to say: We may have to foster a political movement. One that doesn't blame most of our social problems on lack of money.

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The Eye . . .

The Eye watches people and groups that have appeared in NEW OPTIONS.

THE EVEN BIGGER PICTURE: In issue #49 we described seven "visionary" political platforms. In the May 1989 *Future Survey*, **Michael Marien** (#23) describes 33 agendas, visions and platforms—everything from the conservative Heritage Foundation's *Mandate for Leadership III* to the various Greenish platforms (\$5.50 from World Future Society, 4916 St. Elmo Ave., Bethesda MD 20814). . . .

EYE ON PEACE: If you enjoyed our critique of the national SANE/FREEZE conference (#54), you'll enjoy a new booklet by 12 key peace activists, **Moving Toward Peace**. It's a great concise summary of the "new thinking" in the peace movement: the concept of common security, the commitment to sophisticated media outreach, etc. Plus it inadvertently reveals the limitations of even the best "peace" thinking today—e.g., plenty is said about people's desire for justice, almost nothing about their desire for freedom (\$2.50 from S.F. Study Group, 2735 Franklin St., San Francisco CA 94123). . . . **Michael Renner** (#52), possibly the Worldwatch Institute's greenest senior researcher, has just come out with a clearly-written and factual booklet on a subject that sorely needed one: "National Security—the Economic and Environmental Dimensions." It could have the same effect in some circles as Bob Scheer's early pamphlet on Vietnam (\$4 from Worldwatch Inst., 1776 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., #701, Washington DC 20036). . . .

FOR THE EARTH: The "Bioregional Bibliography" authorized by the **North American Bioregional Congress** (#35) is, finally, ready. It touts nearly all the books, periodicals and articles associated with the bioregional movement (\$4 from Hudson Bioregional Council, c/o Kirk Sale, 113 W. 11th St., New York NY 10011). . . . If you don't think bioregionalism is relevant to public policy, just see the new booklet by **Peter Berg** (#48) et al., *A Green City Program for San Francisco Bay Area Cities & Towns*. Developed with representatives of over 100 Bay Area organizations, the handsome, evocatively-written booklet (critiques, visions and "fables" are all here) teases out practical bioregional positions on such real-world subjects as urban planning and urban energy use, as well as on such subjects as "celebrating life-place vitality" and "urban wild habitat" (\$7 from Planet Drum Fdn, P.O. Box 31251, San Francisco CA 94131). . . .

That's an Eyeful!

The Ear . . .

Mixed feelings

I must say I have mixed feelings about the cover story "The New Age Comes to Congress" (NEW OPTIONS #57). It's peachy keen, even hopeful, that some of our Congresspersons and Senators have big enough hearts and minds to come up with "Greenish, post-liberal" legislation. But that doesn't cut it for me. What about their *other* bills?

Your story is in some ways legitimizing two parties which are pushing this world into hell in a bucket, excuse my terminology. The U.S.'s counterpart of the Mexican PRI [party] does not need any more help!

I enjoy NEW OPTIONS, but perhaps your good energy could be spent more productively elsewhere.

—Vernon Alper
Amherst MA, "Planet Earth Bioregion"

Note to readers: When the names of the bioregions are in quotation marks, it means they've been supplied by the letter-writers themselves.

I really appreciated your Congressional scorecard. I found myself going over that information again and again, sorting it all out, putting some pieces together in new and very interesting ways.

—Helen Hegener
Home Education Press
Tonasket WA, "Columbia Bioregion"

Your report on Congress was encouraging in that it demonstrates that our decentralist/Green/humanitarian issues are beginning to influence the mainstream agenda. But the fact that almost none of these bills passed, and few even came to a vote, should remind us of how completely the political (and economic) machinery is controlled by a power elite that is dominated by special interests. It underlines the argument that top-down, power politics is inimical to decentralist, humane values.

For my part, I will continue to emphasize the nurturance of grassroots initiatives and the fostering of cooperative communities. It is from this base of personal responsibility and local action that the necessary changes will, I think, be made.

—Tom Greco
School of Living
Rochester NY, Great Lakes Bioregion

You do great work, but I can't believe you would stigmatize and trivialize the essence of

what you have been working to create by labeling it "New Age," as in the headline over your Congressional scorecard story.

The "New Age" label has bad press all over the planet—in many cases, deservedly—and nothing can ever be done to fashion a serious politico-economic theory, practice or movement from the New Age constituency (and what that term encompasses!). I thought you had left "New Age" politics behind long ago.

—David Haenke
Ecological Society Project
Newburg MO, Ozark Bioregion

Bum bills

I agree that most of the bills you highlighted are headed in the right direction. Before we jump on the debt-for-nature bandwagon, though (item #o in your article), I'd like us to do some hard thinking and listening to people—especially villagers and tribal peoples.

On the surface, this latest way of saving the rainforests may seem wonderfully simple and elegant: help rid a country of some of its debt while preserving valuable rainforest at the same time. My objections stem from my deep belief that, ultimately, the land in the tropics must belong to the people that live there—the peasants and tribal peoples.

I realize that this isn't possible given the land ownership structures in most tropical countries. Still, that does not mean that rich North Americans, well-meaning environmental organizations and commercial banks should buy the land! Two wrongs do not make a right.

Debt-for-nature swaps also legitimize the debt, a debt that has in many cases been repaid many times over—in cash, land, and people's lives.

—Susan Meeker-Lowry
Editor, Catalyst Newsletter
Montpelier VT, Highlands Bioregion

In view of the global warming from the burning of fossil fuels, the inexorable growth in electricity demand and the limitations of alternative sources, being against nuclear energy (item #g in your article) makes about as much sense as railing against George III.

Nor does being against food irradiation (item #c) bespeak *real* concern for our fellow man—that is, concern leavened by informed pragmatism. Consider the food that spoils, the hunger here and abroad, and the alternatives (chemical treatment; food riddled with insects and spores), and irradiation is a boon not to be scorned.

Don't give me the baloney about nuclear wastes, the "promise" of solar, the conservation we could achieve if only we could police people enough, alleged findings of some obscure Indian group about ill-effects of food irradiation.

My social and political convictions don't displace my technical assessments.

—Sydney Abington
Cohasset MA, Lower New Engl. Bior'n

In trying to press my legislator, David Price, to be more post-liberal, I ran across a problem with one of your recommendations. I'm referring to your suggestion that I encourage Mr. Price to support Mr. Kostmayer's bill providing assistance to Nicaragua through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

In principle this was a nice idea; in practice I'm not so sure. It was through the NED that the U.S. Embassy staged the June 1988 democratic rally in Namdiame, Nicaragua. The result was that U.S. Ambassador Melton was ordered to leave, and President Reagan retaliated by expelling the Nicaraguan ambassador. This is far from the "positive interventionism" that you claim to favor!

If we have to intervene at all, I would like to recommend that our legislators not always try to create new U.S. programs, but consider supporting others sponsored by other countries and organizations. In Nicaragua, support could be directed to the Ebert Foundation, whose mission is similar to that of the NED but whose function is not subject to outside political dogma.

—Paul Meissner
Chapel Hill NC, Piedmont Bioregion

Condescending

I am offended at your condescending tone in the following lines: "What I didn't expect, and what absolutely knocked me on my ear, is how self-aware the workers are, [and how they're] full of creative new ideas for re-vamping the economy" ("Blue Collar Visions," #55).

What snotty upper-middle-class prejudice! I would have thought you'd be aware that the DO-ers of jobs can and do make valuable suggestions, and I'd have thought you'd naturally transfer your understanding to the larger societal picture.

When I was "a young radical comfortably enrolled in college" (your phrase), I had fantasies of being an educated person in a society where class didn't matter. Thirty-plus years later I woke from that fantasy and realized that, despite my degree, I am still a working-class person, daughter of THINKING working-class people, selling my time and energy for wages while the managers/administrators/experts/politicians make the decisions.

—Lois George-Smith
Tucson AZ, Sonora Bioregion

Patronizing

Your recent review of Robin Morgan's book, *The Demon Lover: On the Sexuality of Terrorism*

(#57), was patronizing and poorly informed.

While you carefully praised Ms. Morgan's book and her previous work, that praise served primarily as pleasant smoke behind which your more deeply felt message took cover. That message seemed to be, "It's not fair to blame men (me) when you don't also blame women, and besides, I'm a New Age kind of a fella—I'm one of the good guys."

This "fair" but essentially defensive posture causes you to miss the useful core of Ms. Morgan's argument, [namely, that] the evolutionary and historical roles of males have always included the greatest component of human violence. The character of the male subculture reflects this, as do the ideologies/paradigms of social organization that have arisen out of the male subculture.

That doesn't mean that all men are terrorists, any more than it means that all women are peace-keeping social "heroes" and models for the New Age. The ideologies that accompany gender subcultures have been around long enough to be available to us all. It does mean, however, that there is a great tendency toward that division of roles—the more violent and irresponsible members of society are almost always men.

You do us no good by chiding Ms. Morgan for being unfair. She is simply telling the truth. The historic and current balance of human behavior is male injury and female healing. That's the truth. If we want to actually change it, we have to admit it's true. We have to start from where we are, not where we want to be.

Yes, we will also need to examine "women's wounds and men's strengths." But we will have to examine all wounds and strengths in the clear and often cold light of day, not through the warm gauze of "a bit of compassion." The basis for compassion is truth, not denial for the sake of our feelings.

Denial is as much a tool of terrorism as direct violence. Denial permits us to hide the terrorism in ourselves and others. We cannot see and change what we refuse to admit is there.

—Jonathan Tucker

Florence MA, Pioneer Valley Bioregion

I enjoyed your letter to Robin Morgan. Yes—a little compassion.

—Kitty Wheaton

Santa Barbara CA, "South Coast Bior'n"

Listen more closely

We would like to clarify a few things regarding your article on the Listening Project (#57):

- Our canvassers are *willing* to spend an hour on an interview. But generally they take a half hour.

- We did not mean to imply that confrontational tactics are never useful. Building relation-

ships and trust between opposing sides is a primary method for bringing about social change—not the only way. The Listening Project is, in one sense, direct action, because it calls on us to come face-to-face with the people who oppose us, rather than always use the media and other go-betweens.

- Taken out of context, our statements on empathy could be seen as [providing ideological justification for] a canvassing method that encourages racists, militarists, etc., by listening to them. In fact, our method accomplishes just the opposite. People end up going deeper into their humanity, their core values that come from the heart, and they begin replacing racism or support for the arms race with compassion, understanding, and new ideas and viewpoints.

—Herb Walters and Judy Scheckel

The Listening Project

Burnsville NC, Appalachia Bioregion

Competitors? Not us!

Thank you for the positive appraisal of our Proposal for a Second U.N. Assembly (NEW OPTIONS #56). Unfortunately, during our interview I was unaware of your intent to compare our plan (which you call "realistic") with that of the World Constitution and Parliament Association (which you call "fundamentalist").

Along with Albert Einstein, I endorse their world-government goal. Though seeking to approach it through a strengthened U.N., I applaud *any other educational and democratic political effort*. We are complementary, not competing!

Regarding your reference to our endorsement by "mostly tiny" organizations, our list of over 100 includes Americans for Democratic Action and World Association of World Federalists, for starters.

Finally, my "rough and wizened voice" is considered "warm and mellow" by most, unless you meant "wise-ened."

—Harry H. Lerner

Int'l Network for a Second U.N. Assembly

New York NY, Hudson Valley Bioregion

You did well to call attention to Gorbachev's 1988 U.N. speech urging the U.N. to consider convening "on a regular basis . . . an assembly of public organizations." You are right, to put it mildly, that "few U.S. media outlets reported on that part of Gorbachev's speech."

However, you begin to wander into romantic wilderness when you go on to say, "Fewer still have reported on the existence of two organizations that have long been working for the founding of a world people's assembly: the International Network for a Second U.N. Assembly and the World Constitution and Parliament Association (WCPA)."

The way to get to a Second U.N. Assembly,

I have been told by Harry Lerner, is that somehow it should be popularly elected, and eventually develop into a true global legislature. This is not a practicable idea for the foreseeable future.

As to the World Constitution approach of Philip Isely, I infuriated Phil when I wrote in our newsletter, "One group, the WCPA, has simply barged ahead to organize the 'Provisional World Parliament'. . . . In its first bill, passed in 1982, it outlawed nuclear weapons. Five years later, the nuclear arms race continues unbridled; enough said."

I quote you: "Good people everywhere are going to have to produce a world constitution—and then try to get the governments of the world to ratify it. Kind of like what the framers of the U.S. Constitution did, but on a world scale." This is nonsense.

The framers of the U.S. Constitution had tangible constituencies, the people and governments of their states. There is no similarity between that situation and a gathering of world governmentals representing only individuals.

Our Binding Triad proposal for decision-making in the U.N., which you discussed in #34, is [still far and away the most realistic approach to world order].

—Dick Hudson

Center for War/Peace Studies

New York NY, "Planet Earth Bioregion"

Dear Congressperson

Here's a copy of a letter I sent to my Congressperson on the basis of your scorecard (#57). Thought you'd enjoy:

"Dear Congressperson Skaggs,

"I receive all your letters and announcements. I commend you for your efforts to communicate with the people you represent. However, I must say that, in reviewing your voting record on issues of global and ecological importance, I am extremely disappointed—especially as I was under the impression when you were running for office that these issues were a priority on your agenda.

"I am basing my observations on the recent NEW OPTIONS newsletter which included a scorecard for the 100th Congress. [She describes the scorecard—ed.] Your score was abysmal—you didn't even rate getting your percentage totalled! By comparison, Pat Schroeder scored 60%. Not totally great, but at least respectable.

"Please know that you do not represent me (and many others of your constituents) on these issues. In the future I'll be looking for candidates who are more sensitive to improving the condition of the Earth and all who live upon her.

"Thank you for listening."

—Arifa Goodman

Nederland CO, Rocky Mountain Bior'n

Lappe: redefining our values

Recently, some political thinkers and activists have begun saying that our values are as important as our positions on "the issues." The U.S. Greens' first public document was its "10 Key Values," and even the very Washington, D.C.-oriented Worldwatch Institute is talking about including a values chapter in its next *State of the World* report.

Now comes Frances Moore Lappe, internationally known writer and activist on world hunger issues, with a book designed both to ratify and deepen our new-found focus on values: *Rediscovering America's Values* (Ballantine, \$22.50).

"The challenge of the 21st century," she claims, "will be to create a values-based politics, one in which our values provide the moorings." Why? She is admirably blunt: "So that no preset economic or political absolutes can constrict our vision." (No wonder some traditional leftists are dismayed by Lappe's new direction.)

Lappe doesn't want us to come up with *new* values, as per the Knudsen-Hoffman book below, but to redefine our traditional values (especially freedom, fairness and democracy) in light of the present.

To that end, she's structured her book as a running dialogue between two voices: that of our "dominant Liberal tradition" and that of her own "emerging philosophy." For 300-plus pages the voices argue with, plead with and bitch at each other. They range all over the political-philosophical map: Do we want freedom "from" or freedom "to"? Is the market fair? Is competition among elites really "democracy"?

Godfather of these voices is Lappe's childhood memory of listening from her bedroom as her parents and their friends argued endlessly about all the big issues. "[They] assumed," she writes, "that developing one's thinking in lively interchange in order to act responsibly was part of what it means to be fully alive."

Quarrels

Three hundred pages is a long time to sustain this kind of thing unless it's done just right, and we have quite a few quarrels with the way it was done.

Lappe painstakingly constructed each voice based on actual texts and statements of "Liberal" and "alternative" thinkers. But in constructing the Liberal (i.e., traditional) voice, she tended to stack the deck by picking the most right-wing thinkers—people like Milton Friedman, George Gilder and Thomas Sowell. The traditional voice would have been able to make

a much stronger case had Lappe borrowed from the kinds of folks who've inspired, e.g., Ripon Society Republicans and neo-liberal Democrats.

Lappe's own voice is described variously as "th[e] emerging alternative," "the emerging worldview," "the alternative paradigm," etc. We think it would be more accurate to say Lappe's voice is the voice of the contemporary political left.

It borrows heavily from the kinds of thinkers who've set the agenda for the extra-parliamentary left in the 1980s—the David Gordons, the Sam Bowles, the Bert Grosses—the kinds of people whose work is featured in *The Nation* and, especially, *Zeta Magazine*. It seldom borrows from the Hazel Hendersons and Herman Dalys and Jeremy Rifkins—the kinds of people who, by stressing consciousness and decentralism and slowing things down and steady-state economics and the like, are creating a truly *new* paradigm.

Time to move on

Because Lappe's "traditional" voice is based largely on thinkers from the committed right, and her "alternative" voice is based largely on thinkers from the committed left, the two voices are by no means committed to learning anything from *each other*. And they don't. For 300-plus pages, neither voice concedes anything to the other. Neither develops, deepens, or grows from its encounter with the other.

Chances are you'll get frustrated with both voices and their self-righteous insistence that we see things their way. In fact, we defy you to read all 300 pages of this book and not come away with a very strong feeling of, "A plague on both your houses! We've got something to learn from each of you, but please, it's time to *move on* already."

Lappe is of two minds about her book's purpose. In some passages she's a real advocate for her "alternative" voice, in other passages she says things like this: "My hope is not that you've taken sides but that you've found yourself arguing with both of us." If that is truly her hope, her book is wildly successful.

Fallows: remembering our values

James Fallows was President Carter's chief speechwriter—until he quit in disgust in 1978 (at the age of 29). Lately he's become one of America's most prolific and highly-respected

journalists, touching on a dazzling variety of topics, seeking to make sense of our condition; and in *More Like Us: Making America Great Again* (Houghton Mifflin, \$19) he pulls together all the themes from his 10 years' searching.

His conclusion: We don't need to *redefine* our values (as Lappe wants), but we do need to *remember* them, ASAP. Our economy and our very future depend on it.

The whole book can be seen as a reply to neo-populists such as Robert Bellah (#23) and Harry Boyte (#7), who want Americans to become more settled, more community-oriented, more communitarian in outlook and temperament. Fallows, too, wants us to become a real "us," a self-conscious People and not just a gaggle of self-centered individualists. But the route he suggests is dramatically different.

When we're at our best, he says, what characterizes us (and no other People on Earth, save perhaps Canadians and Australians) is our "sense of possibility and openness"; our conviction that when things get too rough we can and *should* pick ourselves up and start over—at a new job, in a new town, in a new relationship, whatever. *We are and always have been* a mobile society, and what we need to do is not become less so but become really good at it, first of all by simply *acknowledging* that that's what we are and second of all by making things much more fair.

Mobility vs. community

In a brilliant pair of chapters, Fallows (who's lived in Japan) contrasts Japan's "talent for order" with our "talent for disorder." Sure, he says, we can try to improve our competitive position by becoming more like the Japanese—more dutiful, more dependent on corporations and government, more racially exclusive, more communitarian. But it won't work because it's not "us." We'd be better off making the most of our basic "cultural strengths" (aka values): adaptability, mobility, disorder.

But there's a major stumbling block, says Fallows. We've become more rigid in recent years. Steelworkers no longer feel they can start over. The underclass can't even get started. The Vietnam draft destroyed the sense of fairness and cross-class solidarity that a mobile society needs to hold itself together.

At the heart of our troubles is this: "Confucianism" has come to America. Professional organizations have made it harder and harder for "the uncertified" to even try to succeed. IQ tests have convinced businesses, bureaucracies and citizens that certain people just can't go very far in life. The draft and the schools have begun to steer people toward "the careers and social class that their background seemed to dictate."

Fallows' critique of all this is deeply moving. And his alternative—"the reopening of

America" — is right on the mark (though it doesn't go nearly far enough). Among his suggestions: do away with middle class entitlements (they're not fair to the rest of us), make sure the underclass has access to good public schools, and get rid of credentialism.

Fans of Bellah, Boyte et al. will be quick to see how Fallows's book is an implicit critique of their views. Mobility is preferred to community (inseparable in Fallows's text from "knowing-one's-place"); having "second chances" is preferred to absolute security (inseparable in the text from dependency). Fallows wants us to have a national communal feeling, but he suspects that, in the U.S., such a feeling can only come from all of us knowing that each of us has a fair chance to make something of ourselves, and a deep-seated desire to do so. A "community" of self-developing socially conscious individualists—egad!

Simonson & Walker: multi-cultural values

A couple of years ago, Allen Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind* and E.D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy* roasted Americans' lack of "cultural" knowledge. In response, some so-called radicals sought to minimize the value of literate, "white," "Western" culture. Passions were inflamed and everybody was thrilled. Another battle! Another chance to be on the side of the good guys!

Enter Rick Simonson and Scott Walker. In their recent anthology, *Multi-Cultural Literacy: Opening the American Mind* (Graywolf Press, P.O. Box 75006, St. Paul MN 55175, \$9 pbk), they agree with Bloom and Hirsch that Americans are culturally illiterate. But they also contend that Bloom and Hirsch have a *too narrow definition* of culture. What about non-European traditions and cultures? What about bioregional cultures—those of "the native soil we stand on and the other living things that share our world"? What about the new culture of our electronic-media-dominated society?

Sensible

The anthology consists of essays by 12 writers who belong to—and report on—these other cultures. The essays are almost without exception sensitive and sensible.

James Baldwin reminds us that "the world is larger, more daring, more beautiful and more terrible than anything anyone has ever said about it." Paula Gunn Allen, Native American literary critic, argues that "Indian values and social styles [e.g., a live and let live attitude in matters of personal style] increasingly characterize American life" — a trend she dubs "Indianization." Wendell Berry speaks of the "con-

nections that join people, land and community."

David Mura, a Japanese-American poet, drops his compulsive politeness and urges white Americans to (a) *listen* to other peoples and (b) *give up* some of their power. (There—in a nutshell—is the real political message of this book.) Ishmael Reed, the black novelist, points out that "the world has been arriving at [our] shores for at least 10,000 years," and says we must choose between becoming a place "of all brains and no heart" or becoming a place "where the cultures of the world crisscross. This is possible because the U.S. is unique in the world: The world is here."

In the most original essay in the anthology, *L.A. Weekly* columnist Michael Ventura probes the contours of a brand-new kind of society—one in which the environment is no longer "the people and the land" but "media."

Lappe would have us *redefine* our values; Fallows would have us *remember* them. Most of the contributors to this book take a third tack. They'd have us *uncover* and *recover* all those values that we *should* have made our own, but through pride or prejudice or fear, never did.

Knudsen-Hoffman: new paradigm values

Alone among the books we're reviewing, Gene Knudsen-Hoffman's anthology, *Ways Out* (John Daniel & Co., P.O. Box 21922, Santa Barbara CA 93121, \$11 pbk), says we need to come up with *brand new* values—values based on the wisdom and maturity we've (hopefully) gained as a people.

Twenty-five years ago, *Liberation Magazine* published a big green anthology of its "best writings." One of its contributors was a young therapist and artist named Gene Hoffman. Now

Knudsen-Hoffman has her own anthology, and anyone who knows the *Liberation* anthology will be struck by the similarities. The commitment to nonviolence. The gentleness of tone. The absence of rhetoric. The insistence on going beyond liberalism and Marxism. The clarity and simplicity of thought (the very *opposite* of simple-mindedness).

What's new is the solutions offered. Rather than the humane social democracy of the *Liberation* anthology, Knudsen-Hoffman's anthology is chock-full of solutions that draw on the analyses and experiences of the new paradigm movements we cover in this newsletter. It's one of the very few anthologies covering the entire range of decentralist/globally responsible social thought.

Dozens of brief essays are arranged under three categories, "Personal Ways Out," "Regional Ways Out" and "Global Ways Out." Some titles can suggest the flavor: "No More Competition, Please!"; "Understanding Each Other's Pain"; "Accumulators Anonymous"; "The Need for a Non-Electoral Party"; "Let the Forest Rise"; "Reconciliation, Not Victory"; "A Call for a Balance of Trust."

Watch out

Few of these essays are by "big names," and nearly all of them are by people who've committed their lives to pursuing the truths they write about. Most of them were edited for brevity and simplicity and—how to say this?—egolessness-of-tone by Knudsen-Hoffman.

The result is not impressive in the ponderous intellectual way of a Foucault anthology. But watch out: This friendly, unassuming book can sneak up on you. Twenty-five years from now you may still be going back to it as we still go back to the *Liberation* anthology, shaking our heads and wondering how we could have known so much so soon.

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