

New Options

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U.S.-Soviet Cooperation: After the Euphoria

It's an extraordinary time in Soviet-American relations. Conservative American businessmen and policy analysts are being wined and dined in Moscow by top Party officials. Hundreds of Soviet citizens' groups are springing up, and some are beginning to work with U.S. citizens' groups on everything from combatting terrorism to preserving rainforests. "None of us who work in the field ever predicted these changes," Yale Richmond, 25-year veteran of the U.S. State Department, recently told NEW OPTIONS.

Is the world at a "turning point"? Is the much-talked-about "transformation" finally happening? It is overwhelmingly tempting to say yes, and many of the 400 movement periodicals we receive are doing just that.

Meanwhile, the liberal press is calling for caution. Don't be duped, the media say. Keep your powder dry. Even *The New York Times* didn't print the full text of Gorbachev's extraordinary speech to the U.N., and the truly pathbreaking passages in it (e.g. on the need for international law) have been all but ignored.

Dangers & opportunities

We think it's time to go beyond the social change movement's euphoria and the Establishment's panicky fearfulness. The former is too pretend-world, the latter can easily become self-fulfilling. We'd like to explore the ways in which the new U.S.-Soviet cooperation offers tremendous dangers—and equally tremendous opportunities.

Working together, the U.S. and the Soviet Union can ratify and "set in concrete" some of the worst aspects of the modern world—its inequalities, its commercialism, its lack of genuine democracy, its industrial overdevelopment. Or, working together, the two countries can help the world move in a more life-loving direction.

We spent the last month talking with people who helped make the new U.S.-Soviet relationship possible. We asked them to go beyond

their public rhetoric and speak candidly about the dangers and opportunities ahead.

Ask pointed questions

For Robert Pickus, director of the World Without War Council and co-organizer of the emigre-run Center for Democracy in the USSR, the danger is that we'll unwittingly help solidify the Communist Party's control over Soviet life. The opportunity we have is to further democratic changes in the USSR.

When we spoke with Pickus last week, he posed some questions he'd like all of us to ponder. "Are you intervening on the side of reform," he asked, "or are you helping a one-party state use its propaganda abroad to make itself stronger internally?"

"Are you strengthening a one-party state in the short haul, so as to make its power more complete in the long? Or are you helping achieve the values of an open, democratic society that respects the dignity of individuals?"

Harbor no illusions

For A.W. (Archie) Singham, Sri Lanka-born author of *Non-Alignment in an Age of Alignments* (1986) and de facto North America spokesperson for the Non-Aligned Movement of 102 Third World nations, the danger is that we'll imagine the Soviet and American governments have become generous and idealistic and good. The opportunity is we can use our new-found "breathing space" to restructure the world.

"The peoples of the world have no illusions that the major powers have come to their new relationship for the betterment of humanity," Singham told NEW OPTIONS. "They have come to it for the very simple, cynical reason that their own standards of living will be reduced if the arms race continues. . . ."

"There is no idealism here! Both Gorbachev and the U.S. elites have come to the firm conclusion that their own societies are rapidly decaying. Deficit spending in the U.S. has resulted

in an anarchic society, internally. Arms spending in the Soviet Union has meant no orange juice in Moscow throughout the winter. To attribute idealism to the reality of world politics is an act of naivete. . . ."

"The peoples of the world must applaud this development *whatever* its motivation. Because it gives the peoples of the world some breathing space to restructure the world. . . ."

"[Similarly], to say that the Cold War has come to an end is nonsense. What we see is that the Cold War is, if you wish, declining in intensity, because of the internal problems in the two societies.

"However, as they begin to reconstruct they may become belligerent again.

"[Moreover], two other superpowers have emerged in the world capitalist camp: Japan and Western Europe. . . . And the socialist system is [now also] split into three. There is the Soviet System, which is the center; Eastern Europe, which is looking for a "third way"; and China.

"[Given] these splits, we should not expect a world that is going to be peaceful. What we [are seeing] is the decline of the hegemony of the two-power system and the emergence of a six-power system."

To de-fang this system, Singham would have us "devise an [international] political mechanism. . . . We have made the nation-state the 'holy cow' of the 20th century."

Treat them as equals

For Paul Von Ward, president of Delphi International Group (an international consulting and business services organization), the danger is that we'll patronize the Soviets and reinforce their "gimme syndrome." The opportunity is we can finally begin to establish an egalitarian relationship with them.

"I think we can help the Soviets by not being patronizing," Von Ward told NEW OPTIONS.

"The Soviets don't yet see that joint ventures have to be mutually beneficial. There is still an expectation that somehow the capitalists owe

them something.
 "[One day I told my Soviet joint venture] partner, 'What you're asking for is really an aid handout!—not a real joint venture, not a real international collaborative effort. If foreigners [conclude] that the only way to have a relationship with you is in a technical-assistance mode, well, that's patronizing.' And he said to me, 'Well, I don't care if it is patronizing. I just want the money!'"

"It's very clear that there is an expectation on the part of the Soviets that foreigners will invest in the Soviet restructuring without having the quid-pro-quo benefits that any businessman in the West expects."

How can we make the Soviets true partners, rather than clients or supplicants? "We've got to stop going over and saying—as so many of our citizens' groups do—'Oh, let us help you, let us give you this, let us bring you that.'"

"We've set up a dynamic between us and the Soviets where we just go loaded with gifts, you know? And that's just fine for the first visit. But we've gotten ourselves *and* them caught in this trap of our being the Benefactor."

"That removes the egalitarian and bilateral nature of the relationship that ought to exist. And it perpetuates [what I call their] 'gimme syndrome.'"

"There's this Soviet dependence on allocations by the state. [Now it's being expanded to include] allocations by the capitalists. Both feed into the gimme syndrome. [Neither feeds into the idea of] something you create from the ground up, something you can take responsibility for."

Be sensitive and smart

For Harriett Crosby, president of the Institute for Soviet-American Relations and editor of an indispensable quarterly journal on the subject (*Surviving Together*), the danger is that we'll misunderstand the Soviets—and that our misunderstandings will lead to frustration, failed projects and worse. The opportunity is we can finally begin getting to know each other . . . precondition for surviving together.

"Gorbachev is essentially in favor of the connections we're trying to make," Crosby told NEW OPTIONS, "and in fact policy in the Soviet Union now favors the exchanges and initiatives we're taking, [whether it's] setting up 'space bridges,' or bringing environmentalists together, or arranging for exchanges of scientists or educators. . . ."

"But even when the Soviets who are our counterparts agree to what we're doing, their way of operating, and the values they're operating by, are fundamentally different from ours."

"They may give lip service to individuals taking initiative or assuming responsibility or acting as entrepreneurs, knowing that these are the values of the modern world, and knowing what

it takes to get things done in the modern world. But carrying [such values] out is difficult for people who have not been educated to think creatively, or to take risks, or to take responsibility."

"And so there's frustration; there's disappointment. There are Americans who go over with great intentions, and they're well received, and everything looks rosy—*until* they run into the real problems of implementation."

"That's why it's important for the Americans who are working with Soviets—the activists, the 'citizen diplomats,' the entrepreneurs—really to do their homework. We have to read, study the history, understand *why* the Soviets are the way they are."

"We have to be very sophisticated, so that our well-intentioned efforts don't backfire and produce the reverse of what our intentions are."

Be open to growing

For Gordon Feller, president of Integrated Strategies (a consulting firm specializing in international trade), the danger is that we'll fail to grasp what we have to give each other . . . that we'll simply try to make the Russians be "like us." The opportunity is we can learn from our differences and become fuller, more developed human beings.

"The Soviet mind is not [like ours]," Feller told NEW OPTIONS. "It's round and not square; it's poetic and not nonfiction-oriented. I mean, these people are basically mystical in their orientation. Their physical and economic-system lives have been in such chaos that [they've had to] focus on their inner life."

"That's why Americans absolutely adore going to the Soviet Union. It's so rich inwardly. It's poor outwardly—this is a Third World country—but its spiritual life is very intense. And the interactions with people! I mean, Americans who fall in love with Russian women are a dime a dozen—partly of course because of the fantasy of Natasha, but partly because these people know how to love. . . ."

"This is all very unusual for the American business elite, or the American foundation elite. These are basically technocrats who are accustomed to organization charts and well-conducted meetings. The classic example is going into a meeting with the Soviets and the [Soviets have] no agenda! And yet there is a purpose to the meeting, and they're struggling to bring that purpose into being. . . . It's an endless frustration for Westerners who go over there."

"There is something that doesn't *meet* between us and the Soviets. But I think if we work at bridging this gap, we are going to grow immensely. And they are going to grow immensely. And the convergence of the two models of reality and habits of thought and action, will be something quite beautiful."

"That's what the *power* of this emerging

cooperative relationship is about. We need them desperately. And they need us desperately—for entirely different reasons."

Be open to (re-)learning

For Diana Glasgow, U.S.-USSR Projects Coordinator of the Earthstewards Network, the danger is that we'll miss what we have to give each other. The opportunity is we can explore the incredible (so incredible as to be scary) possibility for creativity that exists between us.

"There's [a certain] energy that occurs in the human relationship between Soviets and Americans that doesn't seem to happen for me anywhere else," Glasgow told NEW OPTIONS. "And it's *very* creative."

"I think it has to do with the Soviets feeling sort of at the brink of *any* possibility. You know, any time a culture is casting off the old and moving into something new, they're really exploring everything."

"I think we help catalyze this in them. They get off on our freedom. They watch us think and move freely, and it helps catalyze their own process."

"I also think we catch it from them. They're on the brink of the new; they're looking at things in a very in-depth way; they're exploring freedom. And it's intoxicating. [It makes us] remember what freedom is all about."

Recognize errors

For Gordon Feller (cited above), another danger is that the Soviets are going to pick up on the worst aspects of the U.S. development process. The opportunity they have is to recognize the error of our ways and seek out fresh perspectives.

"I've had this discussion with some of the very senior Soviets," Feller told us. "I go through this process of explaining what the limits of the industrial model are. I say: You've got to understand that what you're buying into isn't all rosy. And they understand, intellectu-

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ally. But *they want the goodies.*"

What are they buying into, exactly? "I think they're buying into traditional concepts of advertising and marketing. They have no marketplace right now, so [commercial advertising] is irrelevant in one sense. But it will mold and shape consumer attitudes about what's important. And an economy is only as good as the values that people place on the objects they buy. . . ."

"Another thing the Soviets are buying into is the belief that, by definition, capitalization and expansiveness is a good thing. They're buying into a top-down industrial strategy that's modeled on the top-down development process that occurred in the West. . . ."

"What they need is not to be talking to the World Bank development experts; what they need is to be talking to the sustainable development-appropriate technology-Third Way experts."

Experts like Hunter and Amory Lovins and Steve and Doug Hellinger. . . .

Do "technodiplomacy"

For Hunter Lovins, executive director of the Rocky Mountain Institute (#15) and co-author of *Energy Unbound* (#31), the danger is that the Soviets will develop in the traditional environmentally destructive way. The opportunity is that, through what she calls "technodiplomacy," we can convince them to pioneer a different—and wiser—development path.

"If the Soviets develop in the traditional sort of way," Lovins told NEW OPTIONS, "and basically the Soviet Union is a Third World country with a bomb, they will either burn a great deal more of what we call 'brown coal,' a very low-grade coal; build a lot more nuclear plants; enter the world oil market; or all of the above."

"None of that is good for the security of anybody! You either have more acid rain, more Chernobyls, more tension in the Middle East—or you come up with a different approach to development."

"So it seemed worthwhile trying to get to people in the Soviet Union who could put our [soft energy path] ideas into practice. And the result of the last year or so has been phenomenal success, we think, in getting very senior people very excited about these ideas. As near as we can tell, they're going to try to implement them."

"[Basically they'd] use energy much, much more efficiently. . . ."

Empower the Third World

For Steve Hellinger, co-director of The Development GAP (#28) and co-author of *Aid for Just Development* (#54), the danger is that the World Bank and the other multilateral development agencies will become *even less* responsive to the needs of the poor. The opportunity is for the U.S. and the Soviet Union to encourage

self-reliant Third World development.

"The Cold War is going to be fought much less through 'low-intensity warfare,' and much more in the economic arena," Hellinger told NEW OPTIONS. "And the main economic vehicle for the West has been, is now, and even more so in the future will be, the international financial institutions—the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and so on."

"These institutions are going to have a lot of money. And they are really going to be pushing for policy changes [in Third World countries] that are going to bring more and more hardship on the poor, and that are not going to help these countries get out of their debt trap in the long run."

"The alternative is support from the West—and from the Soviet Union—for a much [less export-driven] development process in the Third World, and a much more self-reliant development."

Build "detente from below"

For Murray Bookchin, one of America's few internationally known political theorists, author of *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982), *The Modern Crisis* (#30) and many other books, the danger is that we'll be content to have a "detente from above." The opportunity we have is to forge a "detente from below."

"I welcome the fact that the peoples of the two countries can in one way or another get together," Bookchin told NEW OPTIONS. "I have certain very deep concerns, however."

"These concerns are that we may be deluded into believing that detente between the people who run the countries represents a complete solution to the problems we face."

"The most important thing is to have a detente from below—where people can truly control their relationships with each other—and not one from above, in which the little that's sometimes given can so easily be withdrawn."

"To me, detente from below is the real detente. It can eliminate not only the conflicts that exist [between the U.S. and the Soviet Union], but can also *change the social systems*: the corporate capitalism that we have in America and the bureaucratic capitalism that we have in Russia."

"I believe that people in both countries could be sharing their worlds together, co-jointly, in each other's interests; not only in the exclusive interest of the few who control both countries."

"For example, as Greens we could have a truly international Green movement. Or as women we could have a truly international feminist movement, which speaks from the very hearts of the peoples themselves, and is not simply translated through the voices of the leaders of the two countries."

"We could have a truly active movement for freedom in both countries, in which the oppres-

sed, people of color, underprivileged whites, would be able to co-jointly work together, almost as though they were *one people* striving to improve not only 'their lot,' but the condition of the world."

"[Through this process] we could become one people in the true sense of the word, despite our cultural differences."

Cultivate the grassroots

For Diana Glasgow (cited above), another danger is that we'll pay too much attention to the top, official, "prestigious" layer of Soviet society. The opportunity we have is to connect with ordinary Soviet citizens and activists.

"I think there's room for working at all levels," Glasgow told us. "But I think it should be a real priority for a lot of different people to truly reach into a grassroots level when they work in the Soviet Union."

"The old structures in the Soviet Union really need to fall away. And to the extent we're able to reach down into the grassroots and energize and empower by our contact, I think we've added real hope. . . ."

"I think [Americans] need to look really carefully at who they're choosing to be their Soviet partners. . . . It can be a whole lot easier to deal with an older established Soviet bureaucracy like the Soviet Peace Committee (#47) than it is to deal with one of these new fledgling organizations that have been springing into existence out of the grassroots. They're new, they're young, they don't have the [organizational] skills, and it can be real frustrating working with them."

"But it's a real priority for me. [For the first time] the possibility genuinely exists to deal with [grassroots] Soviet organizations that have the capability to receive money from us, to communicate with us electronically, to have relations with us. And I think we should *do* it."

Re-think our assumptions

For Rob Walker, rapporteur of the Committee for a Just World Peace (#52) and author of the Committee's first synthesis, *One World, Many Worlds* (1988), the danger is that we'll base our new relationship on traditional political assumptions—reinforcing and perpetuating them in the process. The opportunity we have is to take advantage of this special time to rethink our assumptions.

"It seems to me that detente can be understood as a form of managerialism," Walker told NEW OPTIONS. "That's one of its positive aspects, the attempt by the superpowers to manage some of these horrendous problems in a more efficient manner. But if we respond to political problems just in terms of a managerial, efficient ethic, then I think we lose track of some of the deeper problems posed by the global situation at the present moment."

"These may range from philosophical or ideological to questions about how we restructure political life in the late 20th century. . . .

"[Take the] assumption that politics lies in the hands of the ruler, of the politician, of the statesman. There's this notion that people are able to delegate responsibility to the responsible statesmen.

"Now, one can read detente as, indeed, a greater responsibility on the part of statesmen. [And that's a good thing.] But that is not necessarily what politics is, or ought to be.

"I think [the idea] that politics can be delegated to someone else is . . . exactly what is not called for in the current era."

Choose the right "enemy"

For Sam Keen, who's lectured on his book *Faces of the Enemy* (#40) to the Soviet Academy of Sciences, the danger is that we'll choose an inappropriate "enemy" to replace the Soviets. The opportunity we have is to focus on our real "enemies."

"Recently there's an enormous amount of talk about having lost our enemy," Keen told NEW OPTIONS. "People are wondering if we can we get along without an enemy.

"I think the first thing that has to be said is that the accounts of the end of enmity between the U.S. and the Soviet Union are greatly exaggerated! We're a long way from having the threat of peace break out. . . .

"If we do have a substantial increased lessening of real enmity, there are two possibilities.

"The sinister possibility is that we really need to focus our enmity elsewhere. I see that as happening in three places.

"First, we punish the 'enemy within.' The 'enemy within' of a culture of consuming is the poor and the homeless and the children. We are already punishing them by reducing the kinds of social supports they need. . . .

"Second, we renew our attack on nature. One of the great arguments [for U.S.-Soviet cooperation] is if we could only reduce our military budget, we could crank up the industrial system of production again so we could compete worldwide. . . .

"Third, we keep finding symbolic enemies to beat up on. Notice how in the last few weeks Libya has come into the news again, and we are looking very hard to find somebody to clobber. . . .

"The [alternative]—the creative and hopeful possibility—is that we turn to what it is that really is threatening. That has been Gorbachev's suggestion with regard to the environment, and there's been some kind of response by the U.S.

"You can confront the problem of chemical weapons, nuclear weapons and military spending. You can deal with the real problem of trying to wind down a disastrous proliferation of technologies that destroy the environment, and

learn how to live in a more appropriate way. . . ."

Keep the heat on

For Hazel Henderson, author of *The Politics of the Solar Age* (1981) and a key player at the Soviet-American Citizens' Summit (#47), the danger is that we'll be lulled into inaction. The opportunity we have is to pursue our advantage against the military-industrial complex.

"I think it's really good to keep the heat on all of these old military contractors," Henderson told NEW OPTIONS. "You know, everyone's expecting that they will have to cut back. But they're all trying to say, 'Oh, no, no; we've got all kinds of other goodies up our sleeves to spend money on.' So we need to keep up that kind of pressure.

"At the same time, we've got to keep a lot of public [attention] on the idea that, unless the money freed up by U.S.-Soviet cooperation goes into things like Grameen Bank (#37), Self-Employed Women's Association of India, and those kinds of places, then it's almost certainly going to do more harm than good."

Only if it's Green

Is there any way to sum up such a large and varied list of dangers and opportunities?

We think there is. We note that the dangers cited above would—if not guarded against—bring forth a world of increasingly severe economic misery, ecological devastation and political powerlessness.

In the same breath, we note that the opportunities cited above would—if taken advantage of—foster a world of economic equity, ecological wisdom, and political participation.

The deeper issue, then, is not whether or not the superpowers should cooperate. The deeper issue is whether or not that cooperation takes place among people who are prepared to be just, participatory, ecologically sensitive—and psychologically open.

U.S.-Soviet cooperation can only do good in a caring, Greenish context.

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The Eye . . .

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

WATCHING TELEVISION: Search for Common Ground (#22) has gotten its first big break: it's producing a series of half-hour TV shows for PBS. Each will examine a controversial issue within the framework of finding common ground. "If [our] format were used widely, it could lead to a basic shift in the way Americans think about and act on [controversial] issues," says Search's director, John Marks. Look for the shows as part of "The Kwitny Report" every third Sunday starting January 22 at 5 p.m. EST. . . .

EYE ON GROUPS: Americans for Safe Food (#31) has launched a national "safe-food petition drive." Petition calls on the U.S. Department of Agriculture and all state ag departments to "promote the production of food grown without the use of pesticides" and other harmful farm chemicals. Goal: 250,000 signatures (1501 16th St. N.W., DC 20036). . . . Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (#37) is lobbying to include "non-motorized vehicles" in foreign aid legislation. Meanwhile, it's donating another couple thousand bicycles to Haiti, Mozambique and Nicaragua (P.O. Box 56538, DC 20011). . . .

THE LONG VIEW: If you think Andrew Schmookler's *Out of Weakness* (#51) takes a long view, check out octogenarian peace activist Dorothy Baker's pamphlet *Climax of History*, which traces "parallel patterns" of events from 7740 B.C. to the present. Ms. Baker holds out hope for the future—but only if we change our values (\$4 from World Citizens Foundation, P.O. Box 6785, Grand Central Stn, New York NY 10163). . . .

AT A GLANCE: Annie Cheatham, author of *This Way Daybreak Comes* (#26), has just written "Directory of School Mediation and Conflict Resolution Programs," easily the most comprehensive overview of such programs—and living proof of the mediation movement's growth and its impact on schools (\$15 from National Assn for Mediation in Education, 425 Amity St., Amherst MA 01002). . . . Zero Population Growth's "Urban Stress Test"—another glossy, clever, beyond-left-and-right type report on our progress toward a sustainable society (#51)—rates the 180+ biggest U.S. cities according to such criteria as crowding, poverty, education, air quality and violent crime. All 22 of the top-rated cities have populations under 200,000 (\$5 from ZPG, 1400 16th St. N.W., #320, DC 20036). . . .

That's an Eyeful!

Letters . . .

Are you serious?

There is a limit to hope and patience.

I could say that the Shadow Cabinet was chosen by your readers (NEW OPTIONS #53). But your breathlessly approving comments indicate the choices speak your mind, too.

Are you really ready to trust developing and administering national policy—and keeping this whole complex America connected and in relative health—to the people listed?

Are you really serious?

—Robert Pickus

Berkeley CA, Shasta Bioregion

Cabinet shuffles

I like the idea of the Shadow Cabinet, but I'm a little surprised it doesn't include a NASA administrator.

I think this position is especially important now because this person will have the opportunity to rebuild the space program. This program could be built in a positive way, with less STAR WARS and more STAR TREK.

—John Papas

Marlboro MA, Lower New England Bior'n

No one in the Shadow Cabinet seems to be responsible for another potent resource for the future—volunteering.

What if we all began to focus on what we could give, how we could serve, rather than on what we need or want? What a beautiful world that could be!

—Stephen Leighton

Durham NC, Piedmont Bioregion

Had fun envisioning the Shadow Cabinet! [Wish you'd have] published the top 10 for each position.

—Dr. Josephine L. Murray

Cambridge MA, Lower New Engl. Bior'n

We didn't want to emphasize the "popularity contest" aspect of the voting. If you'd like to receive a list of all the people who received votes at each position (minus their vote totals), just send \$2 our way.

A weakness

Not for the first time have you been forced to admit by page three a weakness in page one's proposals!

Sure, I love some of the people proposed

for the Shadow Cabinet (#53), but only as a shadow cabinet. Borsodi, who got there long before most of the rest of us, was—as you say on page three—"a difficult person and a poor administrator" and had to turn the implementation of his vision over to marvellous Mildred Loomis. I don't know all the people who won seats in your cabinet, but I personally know at least two "exceedingly difficult" persons and I'll bet there are a whopping lot of poor administrators!

A major source of despair is the likelihood that the sort of person it takes to run a monstrosity like the Pentagon—even the way Randy Forsberg might want to see it run—would need to have the very authoritarian qualities that seem incompatible with our whole vision of the future. It will take a VERY STRONG PERSON to get the whole mess pared down to manageable size.

—Joan Dye Gussow

Congers NY, Hudson Valley Bioregion

Says who!?!

We'd be interested in just where your contacts got their notion that "nobody works hard any more, nobody cares any more, everybody's just out for themselves. . . ." ("Don't Let the Election Get You Down," #53).

We're active on several levels nationally (alternative education, bioregionalism, the Green movement) and we haven't seen much evidence of your "declining character of the American people." We feel that the American people are getting it together as they've never done before—learning how to pull together, to rely on each other, to roll up their sleeves and pitch in!

Are you sure you're looking at the whole country? It seems somewhat irresponsible to let a few down-in-the-mouth folks in Dayton, Ohio, and Wheeling, West Virginia, speak for the entire country!

—Mark and Helen Hegener

Tonasket WA, Columbia Bioregion

Obstacle to change

I am writing in response to your article "A Few Good Platforms" (#49). Your final sentence reveals what is wrong with all such platforms and, I think, the obstacle to change that is imbedded in the "approach" of NEW OPTIONS.

You dream of a "level playing field so we can begin. . . ." Always the assumption is that it would be better to start from somewhere else than where we find ourselves.

As a psychotherapist helping people change on a daily basis, I observe that the attitude that is revealed here is not only not productive of meaningful change, but is in fact a defense against change. [Real] change occurs when the

real situation we are in is confronted.

—Andrew B. Sears, Ph.D.

Santa Rosa CA, Shasta Bioregion

The inheritance

While I was gratified to see Ralph Borsodi, Mildred Loomis and the School of Living get at least a fraction of the tremendous credit they deserve for creating and preserving the decentralist movement in this country ("How Can They Hang On to a Dream?", #53), I think your article gives a distorted picture of Mildred's role.

While there were divisions within the School of Living board (of which I was a member in the early 1980s), it was hardly a case of the entire board arrayed against Mildred. There were tough issues being faced relative to the survival of the School. Some on the board agreed with Mildred's positions; others did not. Indeed, I found myself agreeing with Mildred on some matters and not on others.

And she certainly did not expect "the public to beat a path to [her] door." Rather, she put tremendous energy into going out to other groups and movements with whom she felt some, even very limited, common ground.

It was because Mildred was willing to put her whole life into it that she led the School—and inspired thousands—for as long as she did. It is a testimony to the enduring value of her efforts that the School is now able to rejuvenate itself and continue its good work.

—Mark Sullivan

Henry George Research Library

New York NY, Hudson Valley Bioregion

Thanks for your article on the School of Living and Community Service, Inc. I recently read the part about Community Service out loud at our board meeting.

It was OK. Mistakes were very minor such as the fact that I will be 71 next birthday! My physical disabilities are due to having had polio when my daughter was three years old.

Thanks for sharing your thoughts. We are all concerned.

—Jane Morgan

Community Service, Inc.

Yellow Springs OH, Ohio Valley Bioregion

Your observations on the combined 100-year record of School of Living and Community Service sum up to a marvelous testimonial. But to uphold them as anything more than relics of an earlier moment on our path of growth, is to lose the very essence of what that growth—and the whole nature of decentralist theory—is all about.

I am talking here about the need to observe the distinction between form and content.

Forms, like old skins and outgrown struc-

tures, are what we rightly leave behind as we evolve. Consciousness is a moving frontier. It requires form only as a temporary structure to give it substance, a momentary locus for collectivizing our energies.

It may be safe to say that any structure more than a half-century old has outlived its use.

The landscape is cluttered with once vital organizational forms doing no more now than wasting the energy devoted to keeping them alive. The thing to learn from them is not their technique, which is necessarily *antique*, but our own lineage so we'll be content that our torch, too, will light the flame of others in turn.

There is a need for each generation to create its own forms. And never to forget that they are only the containments, not the vitals.

—Irv Thomas

Seattle WA, Cascade Bioregion

Counter-love

Your letter-review ("Thomas Berry's Earth Community," #53) did wonders for me in deepening my understanding of the larger implications of my scribbles and the unanswered questions that remain to be dealt with.

I am presently trying to develop a new way of seeing the interpretations given so far of American and even human history. Just now I see historical interpretation as:

- *Progressivist*—the new is better;
- *Conservatist*—the old is better;
- *Ironic*—we achieve the opposite of our best intentions;
- *Ambivalent*—the human venture is forever a *basic* ambivalence between improvement and disimprovement of the human and earthly situation;
- *Integral*—the ecological ideal of a viable human community within a viable planetary community.

The problem is, "Can the human ever become present to the planet Earth in a mutually enhancing manner?"

So be it.—It's enough to make Job give up.

—Tom Berry

Bronx NY, Hudson Valley Bioregion

I was quite surprised and thoroughly thrilled to read your review of my book (*Poland Challenges a Divided World*, #53). I say this partly because I like what you wrote, but also because you genuinely, accurately, got into what it was that I was trying to say. That's the golden part.

Sometimes I think I don't care so terribly if people don't like what I say or do, but I do care whether or not they figure out where it is I'm coming from, and *then* have the strength to be critical. It's the authenticity factor; indeed, the reality factor.

—John Rensenbrink

Bowdoinham ME, Upper N.E. Bior'n

Continued from page eight:

ise. However, two big books have recently been published that are so good—so provocative, so comprehensive—that we've simply got to tell you about them.

Not for peace workers only

Don't be turned off by the trendy title of Frank Barnaby's *Gaia Peace Atlas* (Doubleday, \$19 pbk), or the syrupy dove-with-Earth cover. Inside you'll find the closest thing we now have to a manifesto of decentralist/globally responsible politics.

Even as the U.S. peace movement continues to mouth the tired slogans of the traditional political left (NEW OPTIONS #54), peace and environmental activists the rest of the world over are passionately questioning materialism, economic growth, the absence of spiritual norms and values, and—even—the *right* of nation-states to decide local and global issues. The *Gaia Peace Atlas* describes this questioning in simple prose and stunning pictures, graphs, charts, displays and captions.

Barnaby is former director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute; his co-workers on the atlas included Paul Ekins, editor of *The Living Economy* (#35), and Norman Myers, editor of *Gaia: Atlas of Planet Management* (#22). Not the kind of people who'll beat around the bush, and the introduction sets the tone, not only warning us against the "mechanistic and materialist industrial age . . . [and] patriarchal images of dominance," but recommending "moral controls on technology," "eradication of poverty," a "new internationalism," a "resurgence of local communities," and an "ecological, holistic and cooperative ethic."

The rest of the book is short on rhetoric, long on facts and analysis. The first two thirds is descriptive. What have we learned from the past about the roots of war and peace? What do we know about the "multiplying crises" of our time and about the people and groups that are trying to deal with them?

The final third of the book is prescriptive. First we're given various "choice[s] for humanity" — "growth vs. steady-state," "quality or quantity of life," etc. Then some suggestions for short-term, emergency measures. Finally, some suggestions for "fundamental redirection[s]"—everything from redefining "human nature" to making the U.N. more democratic (by adding a second chamber consisting of popularly elected representatives and members of non-governmental organizations). Nothing seems to escape the authors' attention—not the Right Livelihood Awards (#17), not the U.S. Greens' "Ten Key Values" (#40).

Although we've read this kind of material so many times we can (and do, we're told) recite

it in our sleep, we'd never seen it brought together so effectively—or communicated so clearly. Could it be our movement is ready to fly?

Not for women only

Patrice Wynne's *Womanspirit Sourcebook* (Harper & Row, \$17 pbk) is not for women only. Although its subject is women's spirituality, its larger purpose is to help women and men figure out what it is that "feminine spirituality" has to give to a humane, sustainable society.

To provide an answer, Wynne goes to the source. The book consists of brief descriptions of well over 1,000 spiritual (broadly defined!) books, periodicals, organizations, records, tapes and video resources. There are also brief excerpts from books and interviews with some of the more prominent women authors and artists (including Charlene Spretnak, #3, and Starhawk, #46). And over 200 photos and illustrations.

Wynne is owner of The Womanspirit Catalogue Co. (#33), recently re-named The GAIA Catalogue Co., and has a degree in women's spirituality from San Francisco State University. The descriptions are competent, the interviews go deep. Here's her own (partial) list of what feminine spirituality has to give the universe: "Cooperation, trust, wholeness, nurturance, synergistic power, and authentic love." She highlights a marvellous quote from spiritual feminist Rita Gross: "[When] the feminine aspect of humanity has been returned from exile . . . the world will be repaired."

I wondered about some glaring omissions from this seemingly comprehensive tome (e.g., Robin Morgan's book *The Anatomy of Freedom*, #4). I wished Wynne had dealt with some seemingly dissonant phenomena like the girl groups of the 60s. But I suppose any line you draw has got to be arbitrary; the more you read Wynne's book, the more you realize that all positive phenomena are infused with "feminine spirituality."

A kind of roaring

Most people still speak of peace as the absence of war. Most people still speak of spirituality as the absence of ego. The Barnaby and Wynne books challenge the idea of peace and spirituality as *absences*.

For Barnaby, "peace" involves redistributing wealth, restoring the Earth, redesigning the U.N. and reinvigorating local communities. For Wynne, spiritual women "are questing for aliveness in a dying patriarchal world." For both authors, peace and spirituality are not absences at all, but are brimming with the presence of passionate, inclusive Life. If you read these books, you'll forever remember them as a kind of roaring.

Feldman & Betzold: blue collar visions

Dear Richard Feldman,

When I was a young radical comfortably enrolled in college, I had fantasies of some day moving to Detroit (which I pronounced DEE-troit, because it sounded tougher that way) and going to work in a factory. I think a couple of million student radicals had that fantasy at one time or another.

So did you, according to your just-published book, Richard Feldman and Michael Betzold, eds., *End of the Line: Autoworkers and the American Dream* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, \$20). But unlike me and most of the rest of us, you didn't give it up. In 1971, a year after graduating from one of the best universities in the country, you got a blue-collar job at Ford's Michigan Truck Plant. And stayed there 17 years!

I'd always thought I was pretty wise to have opted out of that particular fantasy. Pretty "realistic"; pretty "mature." Now that I've read your book (written with a friend of yours from a Detroit newspaper), I'm not so sure. The experience seems to have taught you some truths I keep having to re-learn. For example:

"While some of my co-workers have arms as thick as my thighs, and others can reach under a dashboard with the dexterity of a surgeon, I have trouble changing a light switch in my house. . . . [Still, underneath it all] I have found that I am not so different from my co-workers. We share many of the same concerns: our parents' health; our neighbors' welfare; our children's future. . . ."

Self-aware

Your book consists largely of interviews you did with workers from the truck plant, arranged according to type of worker: "Team Players," "Union Advocates," "Sages," "Renegades," etc. You're so intent on presenting this as "their" book that you don't even claim to be the author, merely the editor!

I admire such self-effacement, but I don't trust it. I was afraid your interviews would be propaganda pieces on the Noble-but-Oppressed-Worker theme, such as I'd have wanted to do 17 years ago (and such as you'd have wanted to do then too, probably). But we've all changed and grown since then, haven't we? Your interviews gave me a surer sense of what working people are worried about, thinking about, dreaming about, than anything I've ever read (with the possible exception of some of the Studs Terkel books).

There's sexism and racism and Jap-bashing in the interviews, but I expected that. There are overwhelming feelings of powerlessness

and helplessness, and I kind of expected those, too. What I didn't expect, and what absolutely knocked me on my ear, is how self-aware the workers are. Most of them are fully aware of the life choices they made and the price(s) they paid. "I swapped my time with [my kids] for the [ir economic] future. . . . I'm trading my life for a dollar," says Gary Shellenbarger, 39. "The assembly line is very damaging to your self-esteem," says Ramon Reyes, 39.

Another thing that struck me is that the workers have a sense of what the deeper problems are. "We're all competing with each other materialistically so much that people have gotten withdrawn," says Al Commons, 64. "They are more conscious of how their home compares with your home, their car with your car. That tends to destroy the free-and-easy relationships between people."

The most striking thing of all is that the workers are full of creative new ideas for revamping the economy. Commons would reduce pay differentials among workers, and between workers and management, and provide for "more interchangeability [among jobs] rather than such emphasis on specialization." Sheryl Jackson, 36, would give some of the regular shift's work-time to the unemployed.

Joe Roche, 33, would build one big *international* auto workers' union. Reyes would declare a moratorium on industrial change: "Stop the country for a while. You're going too fast. Let's slow down and reorganize."

Quality and security

At the end of the book, you synthesize the visions of your interviewees. You find they have two principal ones: quality and security.

Both are crucial, you say, but both are double-edged. "If the concepts of quality and security are dominated by the bottom line and the enclave mentality, they are dangerous notions."

You find some evidence that your interviewees are beginning to define quality and security in more life-giving terms. You say some auto workers long to "make a car that will last as long as possible." You say some members of SOSAD (Save Our Sons and Daughters) in Detroit "have started to discuss how their community can have real security—not just the temporary protection of locks and guns and laws—and how their families can instill quality and meaning in the lives of their children—not just the desire for designer jeans."

You say some workers believe the following: "There are more important things than money"; "Family and community are more important

than production and consumption"; "Everyone deserves respect"; "Our happiness should not come at the expense of others or the destruction of the environment."

In our last book review section, we wondered what it would take to open people's hearts and minds to humane, sustainable values. Immersion in Nature (Thomas Berry)? Awareness of global suffering (Mel Gurtov)? A personal, therapeutic journey (Linda Marks)? All of that sounded pretty esoteric, pretty subcultural. Now you come along with the news that many blue collar people *already* have such values, simply from thinking about their lives.

I finished your book full of love and respect for the people who built this country with their hands. Even more important, I began thinking of them as potential political allies . . . maybe for the first time since I stopped thinking about DEE-troit.

Strange, Jackson: the next agriculture

In this corner, the corporatists—with their Thoroughly Modern schemes for large-scale capital-intensive farming on the industrial model.

In that corner, the traditional political left—with its Thoroughly Antiquated notion that farmers are a uniquely virtuous group of victims whose problems would be solved if we'd just guarantee decent prices for their products.

So goes the policy debate on agriculture in Washington these days, with both groups thoroughly convinced that God and history are on their side. Meanwhile, certain things go largely unacknowledged in the debate—e.g., that big farms are *less* efficient than small-to-medium-sized farms; that the rate of soil loss is a national catastrophe; and that U.S. farm produce is riddled with dangerous chemicals. Even the British want to keep our meat out now.

A "third voice" badly needs to be heard in the farm debate—a voice of practical farm economists and ecologists (not ideologists, not romantics) who have a vision of a small-scale, ecologically-aware, values-based agriculture.

When we listened for that voice, over the years, we found ourselves paying attention to two groups in particular: the Center for Rural Affairs in Walthill, Nebr., and The Land Institute near Salina, Kans. Recently, co-directors from each group published books summing up their perspectives and learnings: Marty Strange, *Family Farming* (Univ. of Nebraska Press/Inst. for Food & Development Policy, \$19), and Wes Jackson, *Altars of Unheaven Stone* (North Point Press, \$10 pbk).

In any country worth its salt, publication of

these two books would have been a major political event—they're that challenging and good.

The analyst

Strange's *Family Farming* is one of the best public policy books we have by any "decentralist/globally responsible" thinker.

A Massachusetts activist turned agricultural economist, Strange has spent 16 years at the Center for Rural Affairs (almost as long as Feldman spent at the Michigan Truck Plant), and his expertise, heartfelt affection for family farming, and infectious thoughtfulness infuses every page.

His bibliography includes over 100 references to books and articles by professional agricultural economists. And yet, he's not "above" telling you stories about real Nebraska farmers he's known.

He disproves, in convincing detail, the myth that bigger farms are better farms. In fact, he shows that beyond a certain point "big" is positively risky ("brittle farming," he calls it, echoing the Lovinse's term for non-renewable energy, "brittle power"). He makes the crucial point that farming is suffering from too much capital, not too much labor—and that "resource consumption, not output, should be the measure of a farm. More conservation, not more production, is needed."

He demonstrates—to the chagrin of some liberals and leftists—that price supports alone will do more harm than good, by making it possible for farmers to continue buying heavy machinery and buying up other farmers' land. "Without limits on the accumulation of property, on the right to produce, and on inappropriate uses of technology, setting commodity prices at levels that assure profits will simply feed the process of industrializing American agriculture."

Although the book's focus is public policy, Strange knows that it will take more than public policy to nudge U.S. farmers in a humane, sustainable direction. It will also take cultural choices by farmers themselves. Today's farmers are torn between two sets of values, says Strange—those of community, respect for nature's wisdom, etc., and those of industrial agriculture—and "in a real way, the battle over the future of family farming depends on the outcome of this internal conflict."

Toward the end of the book, Strange suggests a "new mandate" for farm policy that's really a new economic and environmental land ethic:

- "A farmer should be able to pay for farmland by farming it well;
- "A farmer should have to farm it well;
- "A farmer should have to pay for land by farming it, and by no other means;
- "There should be no motive for owning farmland other than to make a living by farming

it well."

Then come recommendations for five key policy changes, "to fulfill this mandate" . . . and 40 pages worth of public policy recommendations. The good people involved in the New Synthesis and U.S. Green platform-writing projects (#49) should unabashedly crib from these pages.

The prophet

To pass from Strange's book to Jackson's *Altars of Unhewn Stone* is to pass from the hands of an economist to those of a biologist and ecologist. It is also—even more strikingly—to pass from the hands of a policy analyst to those of a prophet.

Jackson says there are three tiers of problems in agriculture. The first tier involves "the day-to-day struggle of helping farmers cope." The second involves problems like soil loss and chemicals in the fields. The third tier of problems "is part of the Fall. [It] came when the gatherers and hunters expanded their scale from patches into fields. This decreased our reliance on nature's wisdom while increasing our dependence on human cleverness." Strange's book deals with the first two tiers; Jackson's, with the second and third.

His work at The Land Institute consists largely of trying to develop an agriculture based on prairie patches, rather than on tilled fields. "We are working on the development of mixed perennial grain crops," he writes in *Altars*. "We are interested in simulating the old prairie or in building domestic prairies for the future. Conventional agriculture, which features annuals in monoculture, is nearly opposite to the original prairie, which features mixtures of perennials.

"If we could build domestic prairies we might be able one day to have high-yielding fields that are planted only once every 20 years or so. After the fields had been established, we would need only to harvest the crop, relying on species

diversity to take care of insects, pathogens and fertility."

Before we can begin moving to a prairie-based agriculture, Jackson says, we need to begin changing our economy and culture. Most of *Altars* focuses on the required changes.

Above all, he says, we need to challenge the "industrial" economic model (capitalism-socialism-growth) and replace it with a "biological" model, farm- and community-centered, powered by the sun. And we need to learn the meaning of the Biblical "altar of unhewn stone," namely, that "we are to be more mindful of the original materials of the universe than of the artist. . . . [T]he scientist and artist must remain subordinate to the larger Creation."

Like Strange, Jackson believes that contemporary farm problems reflect a failure of culture. He laments that fewer and fewer farmers trust their common sense perceptions, or think of their farms as ecosystems.

The coming battle will not be between liberals and conservatives, he says, but between "the human cleverness folk and the nature's wisdom advocates."

Jackson's book may be less immediately "practical" than Strange's. But the issues it raises are crucial. A vital political movement needs both trustworthy analysts and jarring prophets, and in the field of agriculture, at least, we've got them.

Barnaby, Wynne: from "peace" to "life"

When we started NEW OPTIONS, we swore we'd never review those oversized, copiously-illustrated "atlases" and "handbooks" that always seem to spring up around Christmas-time. And we've pretty much kept to our promise.

Continued on page six, column two . . .

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