

3-1-1966

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Recommended Citation

Loomis, Mildred (1966) "Homesteaders Discuss Economic Depression," *Green Revolution*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 3 , Article 6.
Available at: <https://research.library.kutztown.edu/greenrevolution/vol4/iss3/6>

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Homesteaders Discuss Economic Depression

February's *Green Revolution* had no more than reached its nearest readers when letters arrived commenting on the editorial, *Homesteaders Face The Future — An Economic Depression?*

"You're dead wrong in telling us a depression is at hand," said one.

"How can you imply that this cycle will end without a severe depression?" asked another.

Ah, communication! How can two people read the same words and come to opposite conclusions? What I tried to do in this space last month was to report conditions as my observation and reading indicated. I am not an economic forecaster. In my own mind, as well as in the title of last month's editorial, there was a question mark. Instead of giving a definitive statement, I presented data from which readers might conclude for themselves.

But human beings are more than "economic" creatures, and homesteading provides for us answers to more than our "economic" problems. Whether in depression or inflation, war or peace, an expanding or shrinking economy, homesteading for many of us is a good way of life.

What Really Starts A Depression?

A third reader asked, "What causes a depression?", and proceeded to answer his question in a brief article:

A depression begins when the owners of businesses stop making, and begin losing, money. They hang on for a time, hoping the situation will change. Finally they give up, and close their factories or shops. This throws their workers out of work. The unemployed reduce their buying while living on their unemployment insurance and savings. This causes sales to decline in other businesses, which go broke and close, throwing their employees out of work. This process goes on, getting worse and worse.

But what started it? Why did businesses which were making money begin to incur losses? Simple. They spent more than they took in. Costs caught up with selling prices.

But what do these costs consist of? Mostly wages (cost of labor), rent (cost of land and location), and raw materials (whose cost, in turn, is made up mostly of wages and rent).

Land Speculation and Land Values

Let's look at the landlord's part in starting depressions.

A small businessman, of whom there are many, has a flourishing business. In this case, let's say it is a stationery store into which he puts all his thought and energy, and spends nearly every waking hour of his time. Starting from scratch, he has developed it to the place where he is earning \$500 a month. It has taken him eight years to achieve this.

He has a ten-year lease at \$200 a month, which was a fair rent for the location at the time the lease was written. The landlord has watched the business prosper, however, and so he sends the owner a notice that upon expiration of the lease the rent will be raised to \$300 a month.

This will take \$100 of the \$500 that the owner was netting each month, and will reduce his income to \$400 a month. "For this," he says, "should I sweat out my life, 10 or 12 hours a day, six days a week, while the landlord exacts tribute of \$300 a month and lives in idleness? I would just be working for the landlord — and getting less for it than I could get as a salary working for some corporation. I will close up. I need a vacation, anyway. When I come back I will look for a job."

So the signs are put up: "Closing Out Sale"; "Lost Our Lease"; "Must Vacate."

Almost every time you see such a sign it means that a landlord has raised the rent to such a figure that the owner of the business believes it is not worth while to continue. One of his major costs has increased so much that it will eat up too much of his income. So he quits. His employees are thrown out of work. If too many landlords raise rents, we can see how this would start a depression.

What can we do about this? We need a new social and public pattern of dealing with land. En masse, we need to study what you in School of Living call our Possessional Problem. Individually, almost the only way one can protect himself from it is to withdraw as much as possible from being dependent on it.

The man who raises his own food is not much affected whether food prices go up or down in the market. The quantity and quality of his food is not determined by the business cycle. He eats just as well during depressions as during prosperity.

Our book, *Go Ahead and Live!*, has had good reviews and much response from *The Humanist*, *Journal of Human Relations*, and *Fellowship*, and a letter printed in *Organic Gardening* brought in many inquiries. *Go Ahead and Live!* is not a "seasonal" book; it deals with universal and long-term problems of living. Help it get used; introduce it to young people in the protest and youth movements. Send for book jackets and flyers from us, and order books (\$4 each) from us, too (School of Living, Brookville, Ohio).

Letters to the Editor

High Schoolers Interested To the Editor:

Not long ago I visited Colorado Rocky Mountain School at Carbondale, Colo., for a couple of days. While there I spoke to an assembly of students and faculty on homesteading. At a class period later, they asked me questions for nearly an hour. Such a response gave me the idea I might do it at other schools. — Bill Treichler, Birch Lake Farm, Walker, Iowa.

Accolade For Women

To the Editor: I note that women contributors wield the facile pens in *Green Revolution* as well as editor. This gives much promise of purposeful pursuit. The age of feminine leadership impends. Let mere men find laurels if they can. Am leaving soon for the mountains and gypsy caravaning. Would be glad to hear from free-beings who want to join this adventure — this free-living crusade. Students and tutors will live in the countryside, naturally, using the lessons they learn each day to free themselves and society from the errors of "civilization." — Rusel Jaque, Box 558, Douglas, Ariz. 85607

Shimber Beris Plans

To the Editor: I am tackling our Shimber Beris school project alone while Mrs. Burden is released for writing. We particularly need some energetic, unspoiled boys. One very successful boy graduated last June and was immediately accepted, ahead of older college boys, by the Peace Corps.

We are planning some very exciting, adventuring and pioneering activities in these parts, using our vessel as a base and exploring very remote areas for a more permanent land base. We find the unique floating school very satisfactory — relieving us from both U. S. and Mexican educational restrictions. — Dr. David C. Burden, Shimber Beris, The Children's Estate, A. P. 157, La Paz, B. C., Mexico

Children in Country

To the Editor: Just finished reading your article in the *National Insider* on country living. It's too bad that everyone with children, especially boys, can't bring them up in the country. I was — on a farm in Maine, and I know what we're talking about. A boy or two, a girl or two, a dog or two — beagles, collies. I had a St. Bernard, a creek with some fish, and blood suckers, darn 'em, hills to slide or ski down in winter, a big garden with all the fresh vegetables you can name — not to mention the witchgrass, the potato bugs that had to be knocked off; mama pigs with babies that follow you like dogs. . . . My husband and I are buying a small farm in New Hampshire this year, moving out from a suburban area. We want to give our children and grandchildren a taste of it. — Evelyn Ellithorpe, Ludlow, Mass.

Frantic For A Farm

To the Editor: The fumes of the Kaiser Steel Mills, the hordes of people in Southern California, and many kinds of filth and poison are driving us from our home. We are frantic to find a farm where we can "live." *The Green Revolution* is an inspiration. How can we get copies of all issues previous to Vol. 3, No. 4? — Michael Geraghty, 1557 S. Riverside Dr., Palm Springs, Calif. 92262

"The Sum Is Greater . . ."

To the Editor: On weekends during the past summer we had fun working together as a small community here in the Bay on our water system. That was a revelation of what a little group working toward the same ends can accomplish. We procured an old 3,000 gallon tank, brushed out a path up the hillside, and six of the men simply got behind and

rolled the tank about 300 feet up the hill to a previously prepared site. The group then rented a trencher and dug about one-fourth mile of ditches four feet deep in which we placed plastic pipe, connected to hydrants behind each of our houses. It is a good feeling to know we have a gravity flow water supply in case the power goes off and for fire protection. We had talked about this project for years, and now we have enough enthusiastic members in our 12-lot community to follow through and enjoy the fruits of the "sum being greater than the parts." — Joe Webb, Rockford Bay, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Homestead Harvest

To the Editor: As tangible proof of your (and Borsodi's) efforts, we had a wonderful harvest of apples, pears, figs, and especially grapes, along with late corn and beans, on our homestead, now in its 20th year. — Lloyd von Haden, 2089 Foothill, Vista, Calif.

More Reasons

To the Editor: Your "Moral and Material Withholding Action" is superb — right from the heart. There are more reasons for it than saving a "remnant" who may think of themselves as "superior." Self-sufficiency and modern homesteading is good just because it accomplishes so many things at once: tax resistance, pacifism, boycott of commercialism, boycott of false values, a good base for health, provides outlet for creative thinking and doing, gives one the consequences of his own actions and decisions, develops personality and responsibility. Homesteading is a living example of the good life which is possible here and now.

No movement ever had more than a few who actually lived according to its principles. But they never could have led the many toward these principles if they had not proclaimed their faith in them. This is not being fanatical; a fanatic is one who is unwilling to discuss one's belief reasonably with other people and who insists by force that everyone must live according to his beliefs. — Eleanor Woods, Blue River, Ore.

Dominica, A Gem

To the Editor: Greetings this time from Dominica. We completed our work on Virgin Islands, and live on this unbelievable tropical isle. Please forward our *Green Revolution* to our new address. We would be glad to write an article for you on Dominica a year from now after we find a formula for homesteading and non-business people to settle here. Meanwhile we will send pamphlets to give details on this little gem — and a gem it is, for those who want to live an organic existence rather than be involved in the perversions of "civilization." — F. D. Siemens, Gen. Del., Roseau, Dominica, British West Indies

Inflation, Stocks And Homesteading

To the Editor: I have before me your 1948 publication, *Inflation Is Coming*, which advises people to invest in productive property instead of futures. That book is now well worn, for I have lived by it for the past 18 years, going into debt only to the extent of developing a homestead away from the big City Milwaukee. But now I'm wondering if people who invested in stocks haven't benefitted more by seeing well-invested money multiplied four and five times.

As an experiment I invested a small amount in slow moving natural resources (metal) stock and have quickly realized a triple gain. If the stock market should reverse itself, these are the stocks that would benefit and would help meet financial obligations in the future — like

The Green Revolution

Second class mailing privilege authorized at Brookville, Ohio 45309.

Published monthly by The School of Living, Lane's End Homestead, Brookville, Ohio 45309.

Editor: Mildred J. Loomis.

Subscription rates: *The Green Revolution*, \$3 a year; *The Green Revolution* with School of Living membership, \$5 a year; *The Green Revolution* and bimonthly *A Way Out*, \$6 a year.

Telephone: TE 8-4522 (New Lebanon Ohio).

educating two sons. One already has a degree in (ironically) business administration, is well schooled in Keynesian theory, and scoffs at my dire predictions.

U. S. controversial activity in Vietnam complicates things still more, making one wonder if the politicians are using that means of sustaining the economy. I'd be interested in your opinion on the "future" and our place in a society which is being taxed beyond endurance. — Mrs. J. W., Greendale, Wisc.

Men of the Trees

To the Editor: We have heard of you through a valued friend, Henry Bailey Stevens. We Men of the Trees are interested in your work as we are striving for goals similar to yours. We advocate a sylvan economy and are concerned with the protection of existing forests and the planting of extensive areas degenerated by erosion. In England much has been done through our society to beautify existing urban areas and so bring a little of Nature back.

I would be interested to hear from you any ideas on how we can best cooperate in furthering the march of the Green Front and improving the lives of all those caught in the grips of urban sprawl. — R. St. Barbe Baker, Mount Cook, Lake Tekapo, New Zealand.

Lane's Endings

Never before have we had such mountains of good, dry fireplace and furnace logs. The winter has been dry, mild and sunny, and John Loomis (aged 78) particularly enjoys getting out the farm tractor, dragging trees from the wood lot, and buzzing them up into firewood. Some trees are 80 feet long. We have used cords of wood this winter, to cut down the coal bill and add to the coziness of open fires in the evenings.

One other result is bushels of wood ashes. Who knows good uses for it, besides using as a deterrent to slugs, snails and bugs on tender plants? Some say that it must be "treated" before much of it can be used as fertilizer. What crops should it be used for? — M.J.L.

July Is For, cont'd

owned so that all persons have maximum freedom to fulfill their true nature?

Join us from July 5 to Aug. 5 at Lane's End Homestead, Brookville, Ohio, for a month-long study of major problems of living. Available for 8 to 10 persons who want to look carefully at our whole "culture": who want to prepare for leadership in adult education for living. Opportunity also for developing writing and speaking, rural life skills, and for improving personal insight and human relating. Write soon if you are interested.

This adventure follows immediately the Ohio Regional Homestead Festival here, July 2-4, and precedes the School of Living Annual Workshop at the Old Mill, Heathcote Rd., Free-land, Md., Aug. 6-14. — M.J.L.

