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Dialog on Free Land

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Peace and Plenty Without Privilege

By Bill Manning
113 Sanger St.
New Braunfels, Tex.

Perhaps you are trying to find a place where you can have the freedom to live as you please. You want to pursue your own fortune insofar as your own human resources and a just share of natural resources makes this possible. You are looking for a place where neither you nor anyone else in the community has any special favors supported by any form of coercion.

I think I can tell you where to find this place—a tropical paradise where it never gets hot or cold, where there are no storms or earthquakes, where there is no sticky humidity nor sultry jungle steam. Before I tell you how you can go there to live free from government domination, let's take a look at some common "wants."

Many Essentials or One?

Some nonconformists looking for a place to establish a new community would like for everyone in the community to believe exactly as they do. They tend to want everyone to have the same religious philosophy, the same health habits, sexual habits, to want the same education for their children and the same technological development, etc. I could list a hundred different things some people would like everyone in the community to think and feel the same way about.

In my opinion, for what it is worth, there isn't as much chance as a snowball has in a furnace

for this kind of agreement. If people have to agree on everything, then no one can get a group of people together with enough skills, courage, finances, enthusiasm and desire to find a place to go there and produce the goods and services needed. My idea is that it is necessary for people to agree on only one thing—that is, justice.

Justice Defined

If we can agree that justice is the assurance of each person's equally exclusive right to himself, and equally proportionate right to the resources of nature, then we have a base from which to build. From there on we can be as different as we want to be, knowing that no one will use force or fraud to injure the person or property of another.

From eleven years of study and searching, I have found a place that is a tropical paradise, where the native people are ready for outsiders to come and establish a community on the basis of justice. But there is a condition: These outsiders must do enough to help the natives economically so that they can see a reason for making land available for this new community.

Voluntary Association

I have designed a voluntary business association which can coordinate enough of the functions of production to do this, and provide all of the goods and services people need to live in such a place, which I call MAPKA (taken from the Esperanto phrase which means Unlimited Business for Peace and Plenty.)

I have also designed a voluntary political association which can help each person to assure or protect his equal right to himself and his proportionate right to the resources of nature, which I call LAPTA, taken from the Esperanto phrase which means Voluntary Association For Land Abundance.

To get a land concession in the paradise I have mentioned, MAPKA will be used to help the native people increase production so they will see some reason for giving up the use rights to much of their unused land for a LAPTA community to be formed.

There is no reason for anyone to believe that the native inhabitants of any place, especially primitives who have fought and died for hundreds of years to keep exploiting outsiders out of their land, will or should give up the land they control just so these outsiders can have a place of freedom to pursue their fortune. In my opinion, there is no reason why anyone in the United States should believe that any group can form a community in any territory where any existing government holds effective and forceful control and be free from the coercion and domination of that community by that government. IT JUST CAN'T BE DONE, and the more successful the community is the more effort will be made to dominate it. The place I am in touch with is free of such government domination. (to be continued)

Another, cont'd

to a small college, in 1965, at Chambersburg, Pa. Roger Westcott is now head of the anthropology department at Drew University, Madison, N. J.

Following that, Gordon and Selma Yaswen headed up the New York School of Living group. As a result of a community conference at Heathcote, they joined, in mid-1966, the Rising Hill Community at Conway, Mass. This community has now disbanded, and Gordon Yaswen is in upper New York State.

This "decentralist trend" was begun years ago. In the early '40s, Mildred Loomis, from the Suffern (N. Y.) School of Living, headed up a New York City decentralist discussion group, and when she left for Lane's End Homestead, near Brookville, O., leadership in the group was assumed by W. B. Newcomb. And he very soon left to become part of the Melbourne Homestead Community, Melbourne, Fla. So it's more than four sets if we take a longer view.

Megalopolis probably doesn't know it, but School of Living has been a little drop in the decentralist bucket. Doesn't this indicate what active, widespread and enthusiastic School of Living discussion groups in cities could accomplish?

Individual, cont'd

sizable membership fees, which might be used to reimburse the founding members for their cooperative purchase of the land.

Individual Freedom

Individual freedom should be balanced by personal responsibility to the community. If you over-stress "maximum individual freedom" you are likely to have a parade of irresponsible rebels and curiosity seekers in and out of the community. With it you will experience anguished book-keeping and community debt.

(Wendall Thomas is the author of *Toward A Democratic Society*, and other books. He has just completed *Toward A World Culture* which has grown out of two decades of thought and study of 20th century theoretical physical science. In describing movements and organizations congenial to his thought he includes School of Living. We hope to publish parts from this book. — Editor)

Dialogue on Free Land

By Stewart Coffin & Louis Potter

[Editor's Note: Mr. Potter's article on "Free Land" in the March *Green Revolution* brought more than a dozen serious responses. We will continue to publish them from time to time (we also hope to compile them into a pamphlet on this subject, using our new photo-offset press). Following are questions from Mr. Coffin, Rt. 1, Lincoln, Mass., answered by Mr. Potter (founder of the Academy for Economic Freedom, 19 E. 82nd St., New York City.)

Birthright

S. C.—What is my birthright?
L. P.—Your birthright is the right of self-preservation, the

right to live in freedom and peace, the right of opportunity to work to sustain your life. Your only natural opportunities to toil are on land—the source of sustenance absolutely essential to your life. Your's may be the right to work as a farmer directly on the land or with machines in a factory which are indirectly from land but also directly (since machines take up space). Along with everyone else, you have this birthright. Nature, or the Almighty, supplies land free to all. Yet under our present plan you are obliged to pay for the right to live because all desirable and workable land has been pre-empted by a few. Your birthright is ravaged; your right to live commands a price.

S. C.—Just how many acres is my birthright?

L. P.—All you need for your occupation and for the pursuit of your livelihood. Most producers (whether they own the land they use or not) do not now occupy more land than that. But non-producers who hold or "own" rural tracts or valuable urban sites, and do not use them, are the ones who are withholding more than their birthright. This steals your birthright and that of the multitudes.

Acquisition

S. C.—If I own less than my birthright, or none at all, from whom do I acquire my share?

L. P.—Land would not be subject to distribution by any authority. It would be given by no one. Any newcomer, having no land, would simply squat on any unused land on an honest basis. That is, on the basis of his birthright. The bounds of such use are clearly visible for all to see. There can be no equivocating. Any claimed land that is unused is easily detectable. When the public is enlightened to the thievery of land, there is no other form of publicly recognized thievery which is more obvious.

S. C.—If I own more than that amount, must I give the excess of it away, and to whom?

L. P.—In the first place, in a society where all were alerted to the thievery which is implied in excess claim, such claim could not be made good and enforced. We are assuming a time when all people recognize the nature of their birthright. Such people would not lend themselves to being henchmen for any person making such thieving claims. The power of such a dishonest claimant could not stand among the multitudes who cherish their birthright to land and to freedom. And such thieving claimant would have to say to whom such excess land should be given. It would be given to no one. But, as above, newcomers could and would squat on such excess.

Land and Population

S. C.—After all the land is redistributed and occupied, and the population continues to increase, what do we do with the excess population?

L. P.—Thus far, no country in the world has been fully populated. Belgium is most densely populated (over 800 persons per sq. mi.) and their population is burgeoning as elsewhere. Yet even in Belgium, as everywhere else, all the land is owned by a minor portion, and still considerable land is held unused. When governments and men do not disturb the natural ways of regulating the population, we need not fear total occupation of the land. When a few steal the fruits of the multitude's toil, the latter will be impoverished. The poor have always multiplied at a faster rate than the well-off. Furthermore, when governments subsidize the poor with welfare benefits, it artificially stimulates proliferation of people. Such welfare would no longer be necessary under free land.

Give Land to Indians or China?

S. C.—If we are opposed to acquiring land by force, shall we give the U. S. back to the Indians? Or how about giving our wide open western spaces to China or India? That would be equitable distribution of land, wouldn't it? Why not donate Heathcote land to persons living

Love and Laughter; City and Country

By Bud Plumb
Orchard Homestead
Box 195, Streator, Ill.

Regarding Paul Salstrom's article in the April issue, I would like to second our editor's view, and also Mr. Salstrom's point, that it takes a special kind of person to embrace long-term solitude and rigorous north woods living. And one can grow, in this respect. Unfortunately, Salstrom seems to lack the courage of conviction behind his use of the word "grow" here. He states that he plans to spend the next few years seeking stimulus, love, and laughter in San Francisco. I wish him luck. He'll need it, if that city is still as it was when I visited it in 1960.

Urban Life-Styles

I too was attracted in my younger days to urban bohemianism, its glamour, its promise of a congenial intellectual community. In North Beach and the coterie centered around the City Lights Bookshop I found my contemporaries going through the motions of a life-style they had learned from their own publicity. Each was essentially a tourist looking for some creative nucleus to attach himself to, nobody actually making that which he sought. The truly creative people had fled long ago, perhaps to the hills.

Venice in Los Angeles was like a ghost town. Greenwich Village seems to be suffering in this way more than ever. The surface image barely hides the spiritual malaise in our cities. Chicago's Old Town has become a tourist trap, a side-show. But some people thrive even in such a false atmosphere, for a while at least. It would be folly to try to have most urban types adjust to rural conditions via some sort of compulsory decentralism. And very harmful to rural areas that are already harmed by urban-thinking country dwellers.

As for "love and laughter," which Mr. Salstrom hopes to find in the city, his very pairing of those somewhat incompatible words makes his rationale sound

in the crowded city slums?

L. P.—If that small handful of whites who came to these shores in the early days had been imbued with the honesty of equitable land-holding, there would have been no need to displace the Indians. They and the Indians would have been friends instead of enemies. There was plenty of land for all. There was no need for any of them to hog more than his birthright of land, unless they wanted to steal land and live on the toil of others.

The density of population in India is about 180 per sq. mi.; in China about 375. India has 2½ times the area of the United States; China about 4 times. Their land is equally as rich as ours and not less habitable on the whole than ours. They are far less densely populated than Belgium. The majority of people in India and China are at the mercy of great lords of the land whose hogging of the land keeps them in servility. In China there is now but one holder or one lord of the land, namely government, which makes the poverty and the servility more virulent. Both people would have no need for outside help if land were held according to the birthright of each person, for we must not forget that all subsistence is derived from land (natural resources).

People in the United States, India, Africa, South America, and everywhere, yearn for a piece of land which is economically workable and free, but their ignorance of the widespread thievery of land binds them to grinding poverty and to grovelling servility.

[Editor's Note: At the School of Living Heathcote Community, members hope to make the land "free" to future, next-generation users. We're paying for it now, and holding title to it as a group, with the stipulation that it shall "never more be bought or sold."—See *Leviticus* 25; 23.]

suspect to me. I would commend to his reading the superb article on love by Wilfred Sheed in the March 25 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*. Here is an expose of our attitudes on this subject which is leavened with a satiric humour that makes for enlightenment and laughter, if not love and laughter.

Frost in Despair

Finally, I ask Salstrom to show me one really despairing line in all of Robert Frost's work. There may be such a thing as "Yankee despair," but Frost shows us nothing but beauty and courage in the face of evil. The saddest poem of Frost's I can think of is "Home Burial," and it ends with showing the bonds that can be made deeper by family tragedy. As the wife threatens to leave because she can't understand her husband's stoicism, he declares that he will follow and bring her back "by force." To some, this may not seem like love. We have been conditioned to think of love in terms of laughter and bedrooms. But love can be said to dwell in graveyards and on solitary mountainsides too.

Let's Hear from the Ladies

Both John Seymour (in the March issue) and Salstrom have implied that marriage is a stumbling block to subsistence homesteading in remote areas. If this is true, I'd like to hear some thoughts from our female readers on the subject.

Youth Joins Founding Fathers

If you're a bit confused by this mixed head, you have some idea of the stir in a School of Living trustees meeting at the recent action of 19-year-old Evan LeFever. "Is it o.k.," asked Evan, "if I put \$1000 to a plot in Heathcote community? And can I do it on an installment plan?"

It took several minutes to take this in, and recover from the surprise! Evan, a 1966 high school graduate (from the Sonnewald LeFever homesteaders), has been an attentive and helpful worker at School of Living meetings during past years. He lives and works with Bill Anacker in landscaping and tree surgery; assists with Heathcote grounds and garden; is actively working with the School of Living photo-offset press, and helping to develop the Youth Meeting July 22-23. But he wanted to be a charter member of the founding group.

When the trustees came to their senses, of course the answer was a hearty "Yes," and the founding members, each with \$1000 in land plots, now welcome Evan to their midst. (To date: James I. Smith, Mildred Loomis, John Bischof, Marie Anderson, Leo Ranier.) They agree with him that it is a provident, sensible and exciting step for a young person to take. They, and Evan, hope that other young people will be joining them.

Pennsylvania NFA Meets Aug. 11-12

The Pennsylvania Natural Foods Associates will meet all day Friday and Saturday, Aug. 11 and 12 at York Junior College. Speakers will cover various phases of air, water and food pollution. Featured speaker is Maria Von Trapp, former baroness, who lives with her musical family and operates an organic farm at Stowe, Vt. Natural Food Smorgasbord at 7 p.m. Saturday. Register with R. J. Smyser, Rt. 1, York, Pa.

(School of Living people can attend these meetings enroute to our annual workshop at Heathcote, Freeland, Md., 25 miles south of York, which begins on Sunday, Aug. 13.)

Send us names and addresses of friends who might like to see a copy of *The Green Revolution*. We will mail sample copies to them.