

10-1-1967

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Recommended Citation

Borsodi, Ralph (1967) "Flight From the City - Chapter 4 - The Loom and the Sewing-Machine (first published 1932)," *Green Revolution*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 10 , Article 16.

Available at: <https://research.library.kutztown.edu/greenrevolution/vol5/iss10/16>

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Flight From The City

By Ralph Borsodi (first published 1932)

Chapter 4 — The Loom and the Sewing-Machine

When I first became interested in the possibilities of home weaving, my father told me a story which I have told over and over again because it illustrates most vividly the economic advantages of what I call domestic production.

When he left his home in Hungary to come to this country he was twenty-five years of age. That was not quite fifty years ago. At the time he left Hungary the sheets which were in use in the family's ancestral home were the same sheets which had been included in the hand-spun and hand-woven linens given to his mother as a wedding gift thirty years before. What is more, at the time he left home they were still in perfect condition and apparently good for a lifetime of further service. After thirty years of continuous service those home-spun, home-woven, home-bleached, and home-laundered sheets were still snowy white heavy linen of quality it is impossible to duplicate today.

Now let us contrast the sheets which were in my grandmother's home with the sheets in our home today and in that of practically all of the homes of industrialized America. Compared with the luxurious heavy linen in my grandmother's home, we use a relatively cheap, sleazy, factory-spun, factory-woven and factory-finished sheet, which we used to send out to commercial laundries, and which we replaced about every two years. With domestic laundering they last about twice as long. True, the first cost of our factory-made sheets is much less than the cost of the hand-made linens, but the final and complete cost is much greater and at no time do we have the luxury of using the linens which in my grandmother's home were accepted as their everyday due. I do not know what her linen sheets cost in labor and materials fifty years ago. We pay \$1.25 for ours, and on the basis of commercial laundering, have to purchase new ones every two years. Our expenditure for sheets for thirty years, with a family one-quarter the size of grandmother's, would therefore be \$18.75 per sheet—much more, I am sure, than was spent for sheets during the same period of time in my grandmother's home. And at the end of thirty years, we would have nothing but a pile of sleazy cotton rags, while in the old home they still had the original sheets probably good for again as much service.

Before the era of factory spinning and factory weaving, which began with the first Arkwright mill in Nottingham, England, in 1768, fabrics and clothing were made in the homes and workshops of each community. Men raised the flax and wool and then did the weaving. Women did the spinning and later sewed and knitted the yarns into garments of all kinds. The music of the spinning-wheel and the rhythm of the loom filled the land. Perhaps one-third of the time of men and women—one-third of their total time at labor—was devoted to producing yarns and fabrics which they consumed.

In the place of loom-rooms in its homes, America now has thousands of mills employing hundreds of thousands of wage-earners. Many of the wage-earners in these textile mills are children in spite of the campaigns against child labor. And the wages paid by these mills are notoriously the lowest which prevail in industry in this country. Instead of healthy and creative work in the homes, we have monotonous and deadly labor in mills.

A trifle over a third of the production of the cotton industry is used for industrial purposes. It is used by manufacturers in fabricating tires, automobile bodies, electric wire, and similar industrial products. Two-thirds of the production of cotton and nearly all of the production of silk and wool industry go to the consumer either as piece goods for home sewing, or cut up into wearing apparel by clothing manufacturers. This means that only 10 to 15 per cent of the total number of factories and workers in the entire industry are engaged in producing for the needs of other industries. All of the rest are doing work which used to be done in the home and much of which might still be done there. And our experiments with sewing and weaving tend to show that it can be done at an actual saving of labor or money.

If all the resources of modern science and industry were to be utilized for the purpose of making the spinning-wheel, the reel, and the loom into really efficient domestic machines (as efficient relatively as is the average domestic sewing-machine), the number of textile mills which could meet the competition of the home producer would be insignificant. And if modern inventive genius were thus applied to these appliances for weaving, there would be no drudgery in domestic weaving; a saving of time and money would be effected; the quality and design of fabrics would be improved, and everybody of high and low degree would be furnished an opportunity to engage in interesting and expressive work. Such improved machinery would give to the home a new practical and economic function.

Our loom, in spite of the attachment of a flying shuttle, which has increased its efficiency greatly, remains one of the most primitive pieces of machinery in our home. There is at present no really efficient domestic loom upon the market. Most of the looms made for what is called "hand weaving" with emphasis on the silent word "art," are built upon archaic models or devised so as to make weaving as difficult as possible instead of as easy as possible.

The biggest market for these looms is, I believe, in the institutional field. Weaving is one of the favored methods of "occupational therapy" in the ever-increasing number of institutions for nervous and mental disorders which we are erecting all over the country. The strain of repetitive work in our factories and offices, and the absence of creative and productive work in our homes, particularly for women, children, and the aged, is turning us into a race of neurotics. Weaving is being revived after a fashion, as a therapeutic measure to restore these unfortunates to health. What a ghastly commentary upon what we have called progress. Having taken the looms out of homes during the past century and transferred them to factories, we now find that the absence of the creative work they used to furnish is producing an ever-increasing number of neurotic men and women, and an endless number of "problem" children. So our physicians are putting the loom into their institutions in order to make the victims of this deprivation well again. Then they turn them, after curing them, back into their loomless homes to break down again.

The looms built for occupational therapy and hand-weaving generally are deliberately designed to increase the amount of manual work which those who operate them have to perform for every yard of cloth produced. As a result the actual production of cloth is slow and laborious. Yet there is no reason why this should be so. The right kind of loom would enable the average family to produce suitings, blankets, rugs, draperies, and domestic fabrics of all kinds of a quality superior to those generally produced in factories and on

sale in stores at a far lower cost after taking time and all materials and supplies into consideration. The artistic and emotional gains from the practice of this craft would therefore be a clear gain.

In the average home, a loom which will weave a width of a yard is sufficient. Ours is able to handle fabrics up to forty-four inches in width. While many things can be made on a simple two-harness loom, we find the four-harness loom a more useful type because of its greater range of design. But every loom should be equipped with an efficient system for warping, and with a flying shuttle, if it is to enable the home-weaver to compete upon an economic basis with the factory. Neither of these is expensive—in fact, the whole investment in equipment in order to weave need not exceed \$75 if one can make the flying-shuttle arrangement oneself. The shuttle attachment on my loom was home-made and took me only three or four hours to put together. With such a loom, even an average weaver can produce a yard of cloth an hour—and a speedy weaver, willing to exert himself, can produce thirty yards per day. Since it takes only seven yards of twenty-seven-inch cloth to make a three-piece suit for a man, it is possible to weave the cloth for a suit in a single day on a small loom, and in less than a day on a loom to handle fifty-four-inch cloth.

North of the Mississippi—

Are You An Amateur? Why Not Be A Homesteader Too?

By Ferdi & Rebecca Knoess
Pennington, Minn.

Mortgages are like a good laxative. You get an enterprise and you take a mortgage. In due time, you are free of the enterprise. This is known as the free enterprise system." — Elmer Borman, early North Dakota homesteader.

Thoreau pointed out the madness of "spending the best part of one's life earning money in order to enjoy a questionable liberty during the least valuable part of it." The spirit of individual exploration, wondering, self-sufficiency and dissent will not be snuffed out. It may, however, be enjoyed by fewer people unless the lemming-like suicide run to urban traps is halted. 70% of the American people are now clustered on 1% of the land! A deadening cash economy is enforcing a new serfdom: to shop and office. Seniority, pensions and increasing debt tend to subject the employed individual to the ever-growing company octopus. Security is seen in the manipulated abstractions of finance capitalism: cash, bonds, stock, insurance, and, of course, the various methods of usury.

"It is wonderful. We are still on the same land our father and mother cleared with the salt of their sweat. We have stayed here to think, to reason things out as working people, men and women, who produce all the riches of the earth. We have tried to husband our land. Man cannot be without land. It should be free and used with care by competent producers for the welfare of the human family."—Frank Engman, northern Minnesota homesteader.

Moving to a rural or remote location won't solve all your problems (as Rebecca and I have learned). New situations must be faced up to and many old habits unlearned. Much inexpensive or free land is yet to be had in both the U. S. and Canada. Several areas of the world are sparsely populated or without inhabitants. An enormous amount of food may be grown on a small garden plot. Wild food is plentiful almost everywhere. One of the pleasures of rural living is foraging for the unlimited delicacies to be had for the taking. There are good handbooks available to anyone not experienced in wildlore.

Simple cabins, from logs or

milled lumber, can easily be put up by any novice for a nominal cost. Natives will readily give advice on how to go about it, if such help is needed. You need not be a master carpenter or have special skills, such as axmanship, to raise a well turned out shelter. Most log, frame or similar housing built by the woodsmen and plainsmen was done by amateurs. These immigrants (today's fleeing urbanites may be compared) were hardly experts at adobe, frame, log or sod structures. Today we have the advantage of their experience, more tools (not a great many are really required), wider communication through mail and books.

We receive letters from people saying they are uncertain about making a go of it outside the city. There are always possibilities to take in the limited amount of cash required. More opportunities than we ever thought of exist. Borrowing-loaning, barter, sharing and labor trading are part of the everyday life in our neighborhood. We arrived here as novices, and still are to a great extent. Didn't know a thing about water pumps or building; nor much about what to grow and how much; the amount and kind of firewood needed; animal husbandry; child bearing and rearing; the fine art of foraging, trading with neighbors or culling usable items from the dump. You name it. We're still here: I guess too stubborn to leave and too determined to make a new beginning.

Rebecca and I are green as hell, like many of you. But if you're concerned about a saner existence and the possibilities of life-enhancing social patterns for yourself and your children you'll make the move and soon. Anyone who reads this paper must have some kind of determination. Just dump about three-quarters of the anchors you've accumulated and throw the rest in a secondhand pickup or wagon and scoot out of there. We have few regrets.

"Yesterday is ashes, tomorrow wood, only today does the fire burn brightly." — American Indian proverb.

Goat's Milk And Arthritis

As a teenager, my husband was plagued with a kind of arthritis. He had painful swelling of hands and joints then. It continued after we were married. An old Mexican told him that if



LOG home built by the Harry Griswold family, Kaslo, B. C. They're Green Revolutioners.

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APPEAL TO THOSE OVER 30 who agree that compassion and concern is the basis for a new way of life; who will seriously consider learning how to love one another; who will give and forgive without "expecting" such response from others until we first act with love; who will find a way to put into practice this new way of life. — Write to Frances Crary, RR, Box 407, Lakeport, Calif. (7-67)

Poems for a Green Revolution — 60 gems of insight and feeling by C. S. Dawson. Three groups: some depict the ugliness of our artificial world; some the beauty of the natural world; some decentralist life and living. Product of new School of Living Press. \$1. Order from Heathcote Center, Rt. 1, Box 129, Freeland, Md. (5-67)

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THE OWNER-BUILT HOME is now completed. Volumes I, II, III, IV are available (\$2 for each volume) from: Ken Kern, Sierra Route, Oakhurst, Calif.

WORK APRONS, BARGAINS, TAILOR MADE. BEST IN AMERICAN Shopping Bags, HEAVY fabric, large, reinforced. Also agents wanted. Write Dept. GR, A. Winow, 41-06 Vernon Blvd., Long Island City, N. Y. 11101. (6-67)

THOREAU and Nietzsche find an inheritor in LOVELIFE, vigorous expose of fraudulent professions and closed thinking, recommending healthful freedom. Hardbound, 113 pages, \$3 from R. MacLead, Box 1180, Creston, B. C., Canada. Your money cheerfully refunded if you are not satisfied. (8-67)

WILL SHARE Michigan land. At reasonable figure, 2, 5 or 10 acres (also studio apts.) for vacation or long-term lease, especially suitable for retirees. Craft shop and equipment, good beaches, garden spots. Prefer School of Living ideals; hope for cooperative intentional community. Will accommodate renters in exchange for yard and garden work. In heart of cherry and fruit country. Write JWW, c/o School of Living, Brookville, Ohio. (6-67)

HATHA YOGA FOR PHYSICAL CULTURE — 35 from Joe Southard's Health System, 1355 N. 35 St., East St. Louis, Ill. (8-67)

JOIN the Community Round Robin! share your ideas on community. Write Pat Herron, Heathcote Center, Rt. 1, Box 129, Freeland, Md. 21053. (8-67)

GOOD READING: "Country Living" 50c; "Mind if I Smoke?" \$1; "Steps to Christ" 50c; "Raw Food Treatment of Cancer" 40c. Prices include handling. Robert Swett, 309 S. Division, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. (8-67)

FOR SALE: Thriving health club and adjoining health food store. Priced right. Owner has other commitments. Write for price and complete description. — Health Center, 3302 Caseyville Ave., East St. Louis, Ill. 62204. (8-67)

LAND WANTED!

School of Living will act as holder or source of land for persons who want homesteads and homestead communities. All who have land to rent, sell or give for such purposes, please send details to: School of Living, Lane's End Homestead, Brookville, Ohio.

RETIRED gentleman interested in meeting woman vegetarian who loves nature, music and wholesome activities to share future together. Box 3, c/o School of Living, Brookville, Ohio 45309. (9-67)

SUNDRIED olives, unsalted, bitterless. Also unbleached almonds. Free price list. Frank Smith, 349 San Jose Ave., Los Gatos, Calif. (9-67)

PARTNER wanted to live on 40 acre woodland farm. Good hunting and fishing. Prefer organic-minded Catholic bachelor. Write to John Killalea, Rt. 3, Box 172, Black River Falls, Wis. (10-67)

we would get a pair of milk goats and drink lots of milk, the arthritis would disappear. My husband thought this was funny, and didn't believe a word of it.

For years I read about the value of goat milk, and eventually began looking for a good goat. I went to all the nearby towns. read all the farm papers. After some years I found a young doe, who was crying for her 8-month-old kid which her owners had killed. And they hated her.

The first time she saw me, she loved me, and every time I went there she would come right to me. She was giving a small cup of milk twice a day. I paid \$35 for her—which was cheap. Within a matter of months she gradually increased her milk supply to nine pints a day. Later we had her bred to a fine French Alpine, same line she came from, and she became a gallon milker. And my husband's arthritis disappeared, never to return to this day.

Some persons with stomach (continued on page 4)