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"Culture Need Not Die In The Country; My Days Are Perfect"



Ted Odell with
axe and a log.

By Ted Odell
Rt. 1, Brodhead, Wis.

I live in a three room cabin on a 15-acre tract submerged in a thousand acres of Wisconsin timber and water. I'm well out of sight of any other people during most of the year. By supposition most people would think any "cultural" or intellectual life would be impossible under such circumstances. Nonetheless, the year I have lived in this environment was probably the third most culturally active (of 27) in my life. Only two exceeded in that respect, one while I was a student at Harvard College; the other, a lesser breed.

A Typical Day

Let me describe a typical day in my life here. Rise 8 a.m., prepare breakfast over wood fire and listen to the morning concert over the state radio network (by portable FM, no electricity). From 9 to 11, read my weekly issue of *The New Republic*, expedite correspondence. At 11, a university lecture course (e.g., Nationalist Movements in the Near East and North Africa or Capitalism and Socialism). At 12, have lunch. Go outdoors, enjoy hiking miles in the crisp air in the surrounding hills and forests. Cut wood for recreation (and fuel). At 2:15 perhaps tune in on "Music in the Romantic Era" or "Greek and Roman Culture," but more likely spend the whole afternoon outdoors. At 5 or 6, indoors, prepare supper (always delicious after a hike, consisting of wines, meats, cheeses, salads, fruits), tune in an hour of classical chamber music. After dinner, get out the current volume of study — Curtis' *The*

Vegetation of Wisconsin, Shannon's *The Farmer's Last Frontier*, or Humphrey's *The Art of Making Dances*. Read (by kerosene lamp) for an hour. Tune in Prof. Risjord's American History lectures or Prof. Boardman on China. Take notes. At 8:30 resume readings while tuning in evening concert. At 11 or 12 retire. A perfect day.

Nature Study and Choral Singing

While reading such works as Rutherford Platt's *1001 Questions Answered About Trees*, I make field studies of trees (our oaks serve splendidly). Similar use may be made of the stars, the waters, the soils and the hills, herbs, etc. Poetry; inquiry; never had it better.

I draw for my stock of reading from an excellent library system for rural communities. The educational radio network has ten FM outlets throughout the state and can be heard in the remotest North Woods!

In addition, I participate in the Choral Union (oldest singing society in the Middle West), 27 miles away in Milton (population, 3,000). We make our own recordings. My first performance was in Berlioz' *Requiem* (cast of 500), the second, in Berlioz' *Te Deum* and Vivaldi's *Gloria* (with a cast of 700).

I do not grow my own food because all the land is timbered and I am not at liberty to change this situation. I am not privately wealthy. I earn my year's cash in summer conservation work. My amusements are those of action, contemplation and nature. In Wisconsin, culture need not die in the country.

City Crises Are Forcing A New Look At Small Farms and Rural Living

A recent poll shows that 49% of all Americans would prefer to live in a rural area — either in a small town or on a farm.

Yet only one-third do. This gap between those who do and those who only say they want to is focusing more attention on the condition of rural America. President Johnson says he wants something done about it. Two high level study commissions have reported on it: six cabinet officials held a symposium on it; Congress is digging into it.

Small Farm Outdated?

In 1966 the Food and Fiber Commission concluded that the small farm was outdated and hopelessly lost in the backwash of the technological revolution. Some "officials" have said, "good riddance." A general emphasis is that big farms are more efficient. (They certainly get a higher percentage of "government payments," as the 1.3 million farms with less than \$10,000 in gross sales, in 1964, got only one-third of government payments.)

This position on little farms, however, was taken before the 1967 big city violence and riot-

ing, which has aroused public opinion as few current issues have. More and more people now point accusing fingers at rural migration as a cause of city ills.

The Rural Poverty Commission, reporting in the wake of the riots, now says that the small farmer should be helped to stay in business; it wants to sharply cut the moving of up to 600,000 persons a year from farms to cities.

Government to the Rescue?

Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman says it's time to ease economic pressures forcing hundreds of thousands off the land. His plan would fight speculation by allowing the government to buy farm land and re-sell it to small farmers at a fair price; it would fight tight money by offering long-term loans at reduced rates for buying farm land; and it would assist retiring farmers in leasing land to small farmers. (Summarized from the February, 1968, *National Grange* magazine.)

Why No Deeper Solutions?

For the most part, all leading (continued on page 2)

Two Strong Decentralists Speak To Power Groups and Decision Makers

Lewis Mumford and Paul Goodman, philosophers and prophets, are distinguished and widely-discussed decentralists on the American scene. That they were both invited in 1967 into serious discussion with American power groups is extremely significant, any way you look at it.

Some people say this is a sign of the decay and despair in America — that military-industrial leaders are so frightened at the morass they have created that in desperation they are willing to take counsel from the opposition. Others, more hopeful, say this measures growth and openness on the part of the power-structure — that leaders really want new ways out. Probably some men in power are at both levels. Decentralists and green revolutioners should be aware of this important exchange, and take what heart they can from it.



Goodman (left) and Mumford

Lewis Mumford

In his youth, at the turn of the century, Lewis Mumford was training to be an engineer. His early writings appeared in *Modern Electrics* and *Scientific Monthly*. From his 1931 course on "The Drama of The Machines," at Columbia University, came his pioneer work, *Technics and Civilization*. [This book, in a post-graduate course in 1936, influenced me to decentralism, School of Living and homesteading.—MJL]

Since then Mumford has written a score of books critical of modern technical civilization, including a famous series on cities and the condition and transformation of man. His most recent, *The Myth of the Machine* (Harcourt-Brace, 1967) reexamines the whole course of human development, and its conclusion is that

early man was distinguished most, not by his tool-making as anthropologists claim, but by psychological, artistic and spiritual aspects. (A long review of this book is scheduled soon in *Modern Utopian, Search For A Way Out*, now 40c a copy, from 2441 Leconte Ave., Berkeley, Calif. 94709.)

In the spring of 1967, Dr. Mumford addressed engineers, technicians and the faculty of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, exploring the thesis of his then forthcoming book and showing how his audience had misled the world.

In Senate Hearings

In May 1967, he was invited to hearings of a committee (with U. S. Senator Abraham Ribicoff as chairman) considering crash programs to rehabilitate our nation's cities. Mumford there admitted he wasn't an authority in architecture or city planning but said that "from all the mistakes made in the past 25 years in urban renewal, highway building, land use, etc., I would blush to be found in the company of such 'experts.'" Furthermore, "wholesale government intervention (no matter how much money is spent) will have no better results without asking far more fundamental questions and setting more human goals."

Mumford told them that the popularized concept of megalopolis is a silly idea — "the mess is the message and the more massive the mess, the more muddled the message." New cities must foster neighborhood life, social cooperation and human identity. A regional urban pattern would be a network of cities of different forms and sizes set in publicly protected open space permanently dedicated to agriculture and recreation. Mumford calls mechanized organization and mass technology, which increase authoritarianism and reduce human initiative and self-direction, the "megamachine."

Decentralist Challenge

No sound public housing policy will result until other liabilities are reckoned with, such as overproduction of motor cars and undisciplined chemical, drug, rocket, television and narcotics industries. He challenged the commit-

tee's acceptance of "the necessity for an ever-expanding, machine-centered economy, as if this were one of the great laws of nature," and their antagonistic proposals of restoring neighborhoods with the technology of megalopolis. "Democracy in any active sense begins and ends in communities small enough for their members to meet face to face."

He pointed out that a huge supply of capital would skyrocket already inflated land values, with disproportionate amounts going to land owners and real-estate speculators. It would invite ever-greater mega-machines into the building industry. And human neighborhoods would go up in smoke. His final words were "Go slow. Experiment with small measures and small units. . . . The time for fresh thinking on this whole subject is long overdue."

Paul Goodman

Paul Goodman is also a prolific writer and speaker in behalf of anarcho-decentralism. In *Communitas*, years ago, he and his brother presented various life styles, including Borsodi homestead communities. He has taught in several universities, written a score of books, talked to hundreds of student groups (always openly critical of industrial, centralized and sexual domination). Since the mid-fifties his book titles include *Growing Up Absurd*, *People or Personnel*, *Utopian Essays*, *The Society I Live In Is Mine*, and *The Moral Ambiguity of America* — all aimed at humanizing cities, business and life in general — and his attack on the educational system in *Community of Scholars and Compulsory Mis-Education* (a central concept in Borsodi's *Education and Living*).

You Are Dangerous Men

In October, 1967 (the same week protesters held the March on the Pentagon), Goodman was (continued on page 4)

Maple Syrup and Valentine's Day

Dan Lefever (11), Sonneward Homestead, Spring Grove, Pa., delighted himself, his family and friends with a real maple syrup project he started in January.

Attracted by the picture on *Organic Gardening* of a family friend, naturalist Euell Gibbons, gathering sap from trees, Dan carefully read the accompanying article by Gibbons, "Barrels of Sweet Fun," and then got out one of Gibbons' books and read his excellent chapter on "Sweets from Trees." Immediately he decided to try it out.

First thing, he went after some elderberry sticks and began making the spiles or spigots to drive into holes bored into trees. In two evenings he had prepared and collected all his equipment, so he loaded his knapsack and went off to the woods. Then he decided he needed some help. He called his older brother, Evan (who lives at Heathcote Center and works with a tree surgery company), to come home on Saturday to help him find the right kind of trees.

The first Saturday they tapped eight trees. Danny has now doubled this, and has sited more that we will work on later. The sap ran heavily for about two weeks; then, with a temperature drop, he didn't get much. Some evenings he brought in frozen cakes of sap, and sometimes he excited-

(continued on page 2)

"Regeneration, A Total Approach," Is Conference Theme On April 26, 27, 28

"New leaders" and "new" people will gather at the Heathcote School of Living Center the last weekend in April to consider the old and ever-new problem of human growth and development.

In charge of the conference are Jim Stapleton and Margie Wolfe, young educators, artists and social activists now in Washington, D. C. (1638 17th St., N.W.). Jim has completed several years of graduate study in philosophy and social sciences. He maintains a strong interest in decentralization and particularly in Eric Gill. A year ago Jim and Margie visited Lane's End and last August they attended our members' week at Heathcote Center. Intrigued by the School of Living's "total approach" to education and living, they offered (in January) to plan and execute this April conference.

Range of New Leaders

One hope for the April meeting is an exchange, among leaders in various social action groups, on

both concept and method for human regeneration (including aspects of decentralization).

Among those scheduled to be present for discussion are a new individualist theorist, a new left theorist, a leader in an experimental community, and a poet. All School of Living members are welcome, of course. Margie and Jim and others working with them hope that "new life for the School of Living" will be an outcome of this session.

Arrival is suggested on Friday afternoon, April 26, for an orientation meeting that evening. Discussions will continue until mid-afternoon Sunday, with at least one workbee scheduled during the weekend. Costs will be somewhat flexible, probably averaging about \$3 a day (bring bedding). Heathcote Center is a short walk from the Greyhound bus stop at Maryland Line, Md. (25 miles south of York, Pa.). Address of Heathcote Center is Rt. 1, Box 129, Freeland, Md. 21053.

At The Ocean Bottom Or On The Land?

"Living in a big city like New York fits G. K. Chesterton's description of modern civilization. We are, he said, like men at the bottom of the ocean. They get their air and everything else they need through tubes that can easily become tangled and fouled up.

"... These last few weeks the garbage has piled up in the streets, and if the snowstorm that was threatened had come, the traffic would have been impossible. In recent months we have nearly had a standstill of transportation both horizontal and vertical. The schools have been closed by a teachers' strike, and there have been threats by the policemen and firemen.

"New York City is a dramatic and conspicuous example of the vulnerability of urban living. . . .

"This ultimate defenselessness of modern cities is ominous. . . .

"Modern living is dangerous. . . . Can we remain a free society and still provide the great urban masses with the services they must have?"

Who wrote this? Not Ralph Borsodi, Lewis Mumford or Paul Goodman — but Walter Lippmann in Feb. 26 *Newsweek*. In the omitted portions he commented on the handling of the garbage collectors' strike. It's insoluble, he says, merely manageable.

Walter Lippmann is an intelligent man and he reads Chesterton, the noted English decentralist. He does confront his readers with the choice: "a free society or continued servicing of urban masses in cities." He admits the inevitability of counter-revolutions and fascist treatment. He surely is aware of underlying causes in centralized land ownership and monopoly of money and credit.

Maybe a flood of letters from green revolutionists would encourage a direct call to get people out of cities and articles on *removing the real hurdles*, so people can flee to freedom and the land. Who will write these letters?

The Inner Search—

The New Community Needs Meditation

"Many communities, now forming, find points of stress. Sooner or later people in community get into sexual experimentation — at least in cases where members have not had that sexual experimentation in early life. It can really exert a divisive influence, for it touches very intimate portions of peoples' psyches. There needs to be a force toward cohesiveness of the group, such as could be found in group meditation. But of course group meditation wouldn't succeed unless each member saw the value and meaning of individual meditation.

"Know thyself" has been the keynote of all philosophies, and how can one know one's self — his inner motives, needs, desires — unless by sitting quietly and looking into the recesses of one's own mind and finding out what is there. This is how the Buddha gained enlightenment, and he has pointed a way." — from San Francisco

The New Community Needs A Religious Dimension

"I was very interested in Ted Odell's reflections on the Green Revolution following his visit with the Amish community (*Green Revolution*, December, 1967). I share his concern for the religious dimension in community life and agree that it tends to be neglected by the School of Living.

"In supplement to Mr. Odell's remarks, then, one may also make the pragmatic observation that the sociology of intentional communities reveals that only those founded on religious principles have much chance of surviving over any long period of time. In Israel, for instance, it is the orthodox rather than the political kibbutzim which are most viable.

"The central problem of our time, however, is not one of viability in any strictly pragmatic sense. It is not, that is, the problem of the proper use of technology — or some simple return to the soil. A return to the soil is only meaningful if indicative of a larger re-evaluation of the fundamental relation between man and nature. One can return to the soil as a romantic technologist as well as with traditional piety.

"The modern world arose with the acceptance of a new idea of the relation between man and nature — an idea consciously rejected by the ancients but explicitly advocated by such men as Machiavelli, Bacon, and Descartes. (This idea was, one may also note, fundamentally dependent on the Christian interpretation of classical thought.) The central problem of our time is, then, a critique and evaluation of this revolution in attitudes toward the world which produced the modern world, its benefits as well as its evils — with the aim of ordering our own lives in accordance with transcendent values.

"At the same time, however, religion must be something more than a vague emotion. To be true it must be realized in ritual and sacrament. But how shall the old gods return to us, the new men? This is a central corollary question to the central problem of our time.

"Correspondence on these problems would be welcome. I would be especially interested in hearing from others who might share a desire to return to a basically religious way of life by means of establishing an agrarian-based community." — Carl Mitcham, Magnolia Star Route, Nederland, Colo. 80466

Immature Religion and Immature People

"If there is one God, it is logical that there should be one true religion — a religion revealed by that God. And if that God is just and loving, it is reasonable to expect that all people in all places should have an equal revelation of his religion. Instead there are many religions, each reflecting local circumstances, experiences, prejudices, needs.

"The logical explanation of that seems to be that religion, rather than being the creation of God, is the creation of man. And rather than proving man's inherent religious nature, its universality suggests that it is created out of certain widespread human needs. Since humans share some basic needs, regardless of where they live, religions have some common attributes, and pantheons of spiritual beings are among them.

"Common to many such families of spirits are certain figures:

Mother figures, Authority figures and Hero figures.

"The first of these in the individual's life is the mother figure. She gives birth to life, sustains life in helpless weeks and months. The infant develops feelings of belonging, acceptance and understanding out of which he finds security; feelings which he will someday identify with love. He logically seeks future fulfillments of his needs in similar experiences.

"As the individual grows, he has opportunity for greater contact. Contacts introduce the likelihood of conflict, and necessitate judgments and decisions. Thus, some guide is necessary. Conscience must be developed; standards, which all too easily become absolutes, must be established. The first authority figure to help fill these needs may be the father. And his authority adds to the individual's security.

"... In time each individual discovers that his authority figures are not infallible. By adolescence a young person discovers inadequacies of the adults in his life. So he turns more and more to distant hero figures who inspire and challenge. . . . A natural progression in psychological needs (and failure of human figures to fulfill them) results in the creation of non-human and super-human figures to supply these needs. In Christianity this has resulted in the creation by church decree of the Trinity. . . .

"If this works, what's the harm? The question is, does it work? Is continued dependence on such parental authority and hero figures healthy, and a mark of maturity?"

"It seems that continued dependence on outside figures is considered immature and undesirable. Yet that is what much religion promotes. . . .

Man creates his gods out of his own best achievements and highest attributes. He projects his love, reason and strength on God and magnifies them. As Eric Fromm puts it—"Man projects the best he has onto God and thus impoverishes himself. . . . In projecting his most valuable powers onto God, they become separated from him, and in this process he has become alienated from himself."

"Bruno Bettelheim has suggested that the child needs to feel that he is in charge of his destiny, master of his fate, if he is to develop into a full human being. In other words, he must eventually mature to the point where he internalizes parental authority and hero figures, and becomes his own authority and provides his own security. . . . Growth in freedom, from childhood on, with the concurrent experience of responsibility, is the only way to develop a sense of responsibility based on reason rather than on fear. . . . And the free individual, respecting himself as a self, relates easily to others. . . . On the other hand, the dominated individual, subservient to authority (human or imaginary) fears even his god of love. Therefore he has less trusting relationships and proves less adequate. . . . And mature religion, to produce mature people, must concentrate on the extension of such freedom and its resulting responsibility." — William Gold, First Unitarian Church, Richmond, Va. (excerpted)

Letters to the Editor

Which Is True?

To the Editor:

The December *Green Revolution* reported college students getting rid of mononucleosis with large doses of vitamins. You have carried items on healing through short and long fasts, or going without food. Which is true? — Charles Rishel, Potts Grove, Pa. 17865

[This appears to be a choice between two opposites, but it may be a case of one method working in some cases and the other in different situations. The hygienists hold that all illness is the result of accumulated poisons, waste or toxins in the body, and a fast gives the body time to eliminate these, with resulting "healing" of disease. Many people have found this method useful. But in a day when devitalized food is so common, this may not adequately deal with nutritional deficiencies that develop. Records show that many people have had good results from massive doses of vitamin supplements. When experts disagree, the only recourse I know is to depend on one's own experimenting, experience and judgment.—MJL]

Tragic Laughter

To the Editor:

One big trouble with the world today is that people are so seriously involved in political commitments they can't see the absurdity of the system—the joke. (I'm not talking about people just having a sense of humor.) The

Vietnam war is absurd by this time—we've already lost, but it probably will never end, so let's celebrate the End of the War.

When the last hope is gone for humans, all that is left for them to do is laugh. Maybe something new and better can come from/after that tragic laughter. As it is, nobody is laughing. Something happens each day to depress me. I'm realizing that there seems no way one can lessen very much the fear and suspicion plus apathy conditions that exist in the city. But today I am laughing a little. Now I go to pay my university fees and make some pots (ceramic, not herbs). — J. E., Columbus, Ohio

Disturbance In Groups

To the Editor:

You have shared some distress about differences and conflicts in your meetings. Don't overlook the fact that a terrific selective process has been at work. Out of the total population, your meetings have attracted the most way-out mavericks in our society. So naturally there will be more abrasion and sparks flying than if you had a collection of grey-flannel minds. Some way-out people are simply free and uninhibited, but others are pretty disturbed individuals. The roads to agreement are therefore strewn with boulders.

One suggestion: when tempers get hot and blood pressures high, have everyone sit in a circle and hold hands, shut eyes and be silent for, say, five minutes. Let me know how it works out for you.—GMS, New York City

How Not Pay Taxes?

To the Editor:

With so much emphasis on not paying taxes, let's have some hints in *GR* on how to keep income below the tax level. For instance, the Lefevers, with two businesses, how do they keep from paying taxes? Hints for people that don't yet have a real homestead with the usual rat-race jobs would be welcome. I'd like a School of Living group in my community. How does one start? I'm still passing out *GR*s. The December issue was most impressive. I'm getting concerned enough about upcoming famine to think about cancelling some

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City Crises, cont'd

farmers' organizations (Grange, Farm Bureau, National Farmers Organization) have approved the trend toward large-scale, commercial farming in recent decades. Now, since the urban riots, surging questions bring decentralist, family-maintenance farming back into public view. But there is little attempt to go to the economic roots of the troubles.

Obviously, the trend is still to turn to government for help. (Rob Peter to pay Paul — instead of stopping the maladjustment and the robbing at the source.) It is obvious that the basic problem centers in high land costs and high interest rates on sums borrowed to buy land or farm machinery. But who brings up fundamental changes in land tenure? Has no farm leader or government official ever heard of (or read) America's Henry George, or heard of the concept that land belongs to those who use it?

Again we suggest that readers help to spread the concept of *trustery* in land. (Send \$1 for R. Borsodi's 80-page study on this.) And help support the International Foundation for Independence, whose purpose is to establish a sound money system and assist in getting land into the hands of non-profit landholding associations, via low-cost loans. (IFI headquarters are at 163 Water St., Exeter, N. H.)

Maple, cont'd

ly reported the sap was overflowing his jars and asked for big buckets. Eight-year-old Nancy has been helping.

Each evening after school they head for the woods, with our milk cans hanging on a pole they carry between them. In a month they collected 25 gallons of sap, and excitedly enticed eight others (friends and family members) to make the rounds with them.

Fun on the Rounds

First they cross a little brook on a fallen log. As they check each tree they point out and discuss nearby trees. They test the ice on the brook to see whether they can walk on it. When they arrive at the tiny waterfall they look to see whether the water is trickling beneath the ice. At one stop they may collect a few more rocks to add to the path they are making across the brook.

Sometimes they gather a few remaining black walnuts, they check the spring under the old oak tree, they scramble up the big rocks at the edge of the woods. As they cut across the field on the way back, the buckets (sometimes full) hang on the pole between them and they may head for the rock mound to rest a little while.

Depending on the temperature, on who is along, on several other factors, they can hurry around in 15 minutes or they can have an hour or even more of joy and fun.

Valentine's Day

February temperature at Sonnewald was sometimes as low as 10° (with strong winds), but Valentine's Day was bright and mild. When the three children came home from school, ice skates were put on, neighborhood children arrived at the homestead's pond, and there was a glorious time until 5 o'clock.

Then Danny, Nancy and Grace (mother) made the maple sap rounds. It was a wonderful sharing time — a good way, we said, to say "I love you" and "we're happy to be living on a homestead."

Back at the house we proceeded to prepare a festive table. From the pump pit we brought stored red beets and turnips. We sliced the beets and cut out red hearts (put scrap pieces in the juicer with carrots for a red drink for the meal) and from turnip slices we made white hearts. Everyone enjoyed his vegetable valentines. And after supper we boiled down the sap.

Family projects follow the seasons: we are a part of nature. Now we start planting early seeds in flats. We await the spring miracle of green to thrill us all and keep us every grateful to our sustaining Creator.

The Green Revolution

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