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

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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), Sonnawal 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.