<u>KICK THE HABIT ---</u>

INTRODUCTION

Our society is facing a whole raft of problems, including environmental despoilation and pollution, social alienation and crime, and the threat of mass annihilation. Our standard of material comfort remains high, but there is a widespread sense of unease, as well as diseases of over indulgence and unbalanced living. At the same time, deep social inequities are being increased even further and relative poverty, with its accompanying loss of respect for oneself and others, is becoming more widespread.

These, however are only the more obvious problems. Our present lifestyle is fundamentally unsustainable, socially as well as physically. The fundamental dependency of our lifestyle on a rapid exploitation of fossil fuels and the excessive energy requirements of present day technology, may be superficially recognised, but the real implications are not readily appreciated. The degradation of human values of urban living, large centralised bureaucratic organisations and the extensive use of impersonalised monetary transactions, while directly affecting people, is even less appreciated. The perception of such social realities, particularly in their wider ramifications, requires a more abstract understanding, but such realities are, in fact, more basic, and their impact more far reaching.

How can we respond? Can we reform our society or must it be transformed? Are we simply witnessing the decay and inevitable destruction of a civilisation that comes and goes like all others before it, or is there a more fundamental crisis, perhaps of civilisation itself? Are we at risk of wiping out humanity and most of life on earth, or is such an idea itself a product of our overbearing arrogance? Is there an opportunity to forge a rebirth of humanity through a coming crisis, a new age, or is that just the wishful thinking of people caught up in the dying days of their own civilisation?

<u>If</u> our society faces a true crisis, an inherent and irresolvable conflict of forces, developed over time to a point of unsustainable tension, <u>then</u> a sudden and catastrophic change must occur. The accelerating rate of change (and use of energy) required to maintain the social system would, in this case, give rise to a rapid increase in social tension to a point of instability, at which point there would be a sudden breakdown and the final result would be quite indeterminate. There may, then, be an opportunity for a social transformation, a fundamental shift in human values and in the manner in which we live. But even if this is the outcome - and there may be a wide range of possible social transformations, of which we would consider only some desirable - such a scenario implies widespread human suffering, death and destruction. This must be an inevitable accompaniment of a sudden breakdown in the social order.

If we believe our society faces such a crisis, should we be wasting our energy trying to stop the inevitable? Attempting to change the present social system through political actions, lobbying for law changes and pressuring businesses may then be pointless activities, that wastes a lot of human energy. Really constructive effort may be limited to a rebuilding of communities, that reflect a quite different lifestyle, and

can act as the kernel of a new society. Political and lobbying activities may still be worthwhile as a way to influence and persuade people, but the manner in which they were carried out would then be strongly affected by this underlying real aim.

There may, of course, not be such a crisis. We may be able to reform our way out of our current problems. They may not even be that serious.

Nothing in life is certain, least of all social change. We can never be sure that our analysis is correct, and as a society there will always be numerous responses to perceived problems (or unexpected happenings). Socially such diversity is a good thing, but as individuals we must make choices, and abide by them, if we are to carry out effective action. While it is always prudent to consider a range of possibilities and remain open-minded, once we have accepted a particular conclusion we must follow through with the logic of what that conclusion implies.

Unfortunately we do not, as a society, have any clear understanding of our circumstances. There is thus, in my opinion, a lot of woolly thinking going on, with consequently a lot on inconsistent activity, both within established social institutions and among those who seek a more radical transformation. We lack an appropriate philosophical base from which we can properly apprehend the nature of our situation and the bounds within which we can act.

In this discussion paper I have put forward some ideas on how I see our present circumstances and the nature of our pressing problems. It is intended to be a contribution to the debate about our circumstances, but it has as an underlying aim that of persuading you where effective and responsible action lies.

I do believe we face a crisis that is the culmination of a long historical process, and that we are rapidly accelerating towards the crisis point. I have tried to draw out the logic of this belief, and thus what we should be doing as responsible people in such circumstances.

My aim is to encourage the rebuilding of communities where people live and work together in a mutually supportive and beneficial way. Communities that have a basic self-reliance, while being part of a more complex social network of peoples. Communities that have a lifestyle that relates to the particular opportunities and limitations of their environment, and are thus life enhancing and creative. Communities that will be the focus of real social change, providing people with the necessary support and encouragement, while having an inner resilience to better cope with the effects of any breakdown or disintegration of the prevailing social system. To help in this vital rebuilding process I believe the formation of a network of people who are already involved in such activities would be most useful.

To motivate this activity there must be a perceived need and a sufficient understanding of the actual circumstances we face. Understanding is always partial and based on a particular viewpoint, but we can obtain sufficient understanding to enable effective action. I believe there is a growing perception of the need for a fundamental rebuilding of human communities, and this must be balanced with a better understanding of our circumstances. Then, given an acceptance of the reality we face (with a necessary act of faith) there will be a commitment to action.

The processes of individual and social change have a complex pattern, and to describe the many interactive effects it is necessary to take different restricted viewpoints, which in the composite give some idea of the overall pattern. In reality social change must also involve changes in many aspects of society, and there must be an integration of the diverse changes. I will look at some aspects of our social arrangements/organisations, individual values/attitudes, our perception of the world and our place within it, and the appropriateness of technology. As far as possible I will attempt to draw out relationships and comparisons in a way that retains some of the inherent fluidity and interaction, that is, with a minimum use of the ubiquitous dualities (of right & wrong, constructive & destructive etc) that give such rigidity to our discourse. At least a triad of descriptive concepts, such as society, the individual and technology, necessarily retain an inherent tension that prevents a collapse (in the mind) towards one pole, as so easily happens when comparative dualities are used. By the use of conceptual triads we will be at least one step away from dualities, and (hopefully) without unduly complicating the analysis/description retain some of the inherent dynamics of reality. I will make some attempt at least.

At the same time I shall continually emphasise the need to kick the habit - of easy options, of retreat into dreamland, of borrow and hope, of access to power, of exploitation, of games of distraction and destruction, of endless consumption, of constant stimulation, and of cheap energy.

TECHNOLOGY

Our technology gives us the tools we use and defines the physical structures of our lifestyle. I will begin with this more concrete aspect.

The physical basis of our present lifestyle is provided by a technology that is both highly complicated and exceedingly fragile. It is fuelled by a rapid exploitation of large concentrated deposits of fossil fuels, and is dependent on the extraction of similarly concentrated mineral deposits. Industrial processing is very demanding of both energy and raw materials, and goods are produced by many and diverse conversion processes that have no natural interrelationships and are physically separated, often by large distances. This industrial system is highly productive, supplying a mass of consumer goods, but demands a similar high productivity or conversion ratio from the so-called primary production sectors that supply the raw materials. In an attempt to met these demands agriculture has become highly mechanised, and as the mechanical monocultural farming practices have spread, there has followed an increasing reliance on artificial fertilisers and chemical weed and pest control methods. Forests are progressively destroyed while natural soil fertility declines, and accelerating erosion depletes the available soil resources and disrupts watercourses.

Our technology involves a long line of exploitation, from the energy that fuels it all to the primary resources of air, soil and water on which all life depends. It is by any rational analysis fundamentally and inherently unsustainable. Not just because it so obviously relies on fossil fuels, but more because it attempts to displace and take

over from the natural world rather than being integrated within and building onto that much larger system that we do, in fact, live in.

Any increase in the complexity of social living must involve a greater use of energy. Like any living system, a society is an open and dynamic system that can only be maintained by a constant flow of energy through it, and the more complex it becomes the greater must be that flow of energy. But this additional flow of energy must be sustainable if the more complex structure is to be sustained, and this implies an efficient use of energy from renewable sources.

The technology that presently maintains our centralised urban/ industrial societies uses a lot of energy very inefficiently. We release enormous amounts of energy, much of it as waste heat - to produce once used goods that are then also treated as waste. It is a very immature technology that has a similar high energy utilisation but inefficient use as the fast growing plants that rapidly colonise a bare area of ground. It is a technology of colonisation, of takeover and fast growth.

A mature forest, by contrast, uses energy very efficiently, minimising any external inputs and outputs, while recycling its biomass within a complex and diverse system. A technology that could sustain a more complex and diversified society would be similarly efficient, self-organising and recycling. It would fit within and build onto the renewing systems of the natural world to provide a continual surplus for human consumption. Instead of involving linear chains of separate processes linked in an ad hoc way by large expenditures of energy, there would be properly designed integrative processes that had in-built self regulating controls. Rather than being complicated composites of individual elements, the technology would fit together as a functionally integrating system with an inherent logic and purposefulness in its relationships.

Primary production would be the basic component of the economy, and the requirements of this production would shape the structure and form of all the follow-on conversion processes, reversing the present situation. Farming would then give rise to an increase in the total information of the ecosystem, the human cultural activity increasing the overall productivity, and adding cultural information to the existing biological information. Only in this way can extra production (of use to people) be maintained without large and wasteful energy inputs. Instead of a high energy regime - in which the information content of the diverse natural system is degraded and only partly replaced by the cultural information of human activity - there would be a regime of increased ecosystem information.

Human activity would then extend the diverse natural ecosystem in the same way as it has been extended through the whole process of the evolution of life on Earth. A more complex arrangement allowing a further development of the living system - in this case of people in a higher form of social living - would be sustainable because it was maintained through a higher level of order, by a better utilisation of available energy that gives rise to a more complex exchange network that increases the overall information content.

A technology that sustains a complex social arrangement would, thus, be characterised by an intimate relationship with the natural order, be interactive and

self regulating, inherently recycling and energy efficient. It would be developed by careful design, appropriately integrated, and be decided on by people well informed through an openly exchanged knowledge base.

It is because our present technology is so contrary to this, that I believe our present lifestyle is so fundamentally unsustainable.

Sustainability is not simply a matter of some changes in the way we use such natural resources as our agricultural soils, forests or waterways - at greater energy costs! A radical transformation is essential, and this cannot occur by a gradual shifting, with one technological innovation or improvement following another. The present technology was developed within a context of high energy consumption and the exploitative use of all available resources. It cannot be turned around by law changes and government regulations. In fact, energy consumption is increasing, and the rapid expansion of technology suggests that we are well into an accelerating overshoot, where any possibility of reimposing social control is well gone.

In short we must kick the addiction to cheap energy, and develop energy sources that are appropriate to a different lifestyle. It is the excessive use of energy per se that is the root problem, fuelling a continual expansion, growth in consumption, ever increasing exploitation of resources, a destructive technology etc. It is cheap energy that allows massive urbanisation, and an enormous increase in personal mobility, opening up much wider horizons for the individual, but breaking down community life and disrupting the passing on and maintenance of human values.

The search for energy alternatives should not, therefore, concentrate on 'other' cheap sources, or on attempts to make renewable sources cheap supplies. Rather we need to develop energy supplies that fit in with a lifestyle that recognises natural limits and sustainable yields. Resource utilisation must be within natural constraints and aimed at satisfying genuine needs.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Our present technology has not, of course, developed in a vacuum. It has been conditioned by, as well as conditioning, the social structure in which it has developed. The continual abuse of the discoveries of energy sources and power technologies followed from the exploitative nature of the utilising societies. They were societies with a strongly hierarchical social structure, where power relations were the main dynamic of social interactions. Activities were undertaken to demonstrate and exercise power, and the developing technology was fitted into that primary focus of activity.

Technological change and the economic activity in which it takes place now dominates social life, reinforcing the values and institutions that fostered the technological development. Economic activity dictates social requirements, rather than vice-versa, and there is a spiralling technological imperative that impels an ever intensifying competitive struggle. Social institutions have now become subservient - having been for a long time acquiescent - to the demands of technology.

A radical change in the nature of the technology itself can only take place when our social institutions and the human values that underpin them are radically altered. Social priorities cannot be simply reinstated as the primary determinant (and given a different emphasis) while the existing technological structure remains in place.

How then did we get into this bind, and what is the nature of the driving forces? To understand our present predicament it is necessary to look at its development over a long period of time.

A settled lifestyle of agricultural production and city dwelling arose after a sudden change in the climate of the Earth about 15000 to 10000 years ago. Prior to that our ancestors had lived as hunter/gatherers in small extended family units with tribal affiliations.

The change in the world climate opened up wide temperate zones where the nature of the soils, vegetation and climate was conducive to a permanent grazing and cropping of the land. Settled living arose, and larger social units developed that involved a more concentrated pattern of social life of closely farmed areas, villages and towns. Most of the population remained in small family units producing for their own needs, but in the towns specialist craftspeople and traders arose. To coordinate the larger societies a collective power had to be exercised, and this was done by an administering group led by people with customary titles and by religious associations who maintained a custodianship of social beliefs and values.

There is considerable archaeological evidence as well as transmitted oral histories (of legends and myths) that suggest that these agricultural societies were basically cooperative, where people worked together for common social purposes. There was little apparent differentiation of housing and burials that would indicate markedly distinct social rankings, and the type of social works undertaken were those that benefited the society as a whole. The main basis of religion was the Earth Goddess, with an emphasis on fertility and life enhancement.

For perhaps the first 5000 years in which agricultural societies developed, this type of social structure appeared to have been prevalent. Possibly the common goal of developing a new way of life, and the lack of conflict between relatively small and widely spaced groups, engendered such a social structure. The early towns and villages were not fortified, and there is no emphasis on weapons in burial remains.

However about 5000 years ago a quite different type of society started to appear, taking over and displacing the existing settled societies. These new societies were much more competitive and hierarchical, with a strong dominance structure - dominator rather than partnership societies. Social rank depended on the successful exercise of power, and there was constant warfare. Leadership was concentrated, and maintained by hereditary titles, while religious influence was exercised by closed priesthoods, characterised by rigid ideologies and a total obedience by the chosen towards the authorities

Social facilities and structures were, thus, continually being destroyed by the constant battle between hostile social groups, and larger societies could only be developed and maintained by a strong central power.

Bigger towns and cities arose that were heavily fortified. There were now large chieftain houses and palaces, and social works of a monumental type. Burials showed marked differences in social rank, with an emphasis on weapons. The religious base changed to a pantheon of gods and goddesses, with many war gods who were seen as favouring one group or another.

This sharp change in social structure seems to have been associated with sudden waves of invaders, with a widespread migration of peoples and disruption of settled societies. At the same time there appear to have been quite extraordinary natural calamities. It is as though a series of earth shaking catastrophes destroyed the earlier cooperative societies that had arisen naturally with the agricultural development, and replaced them with competitive societies moulded by calamity.

The result of this change was to set up a particular path of social development, that has come to a head in the large nation state societies of the present. Settled living now involved a continual rising up and destruction of distinct civilisations. The societies were centrally controlled and unstable, with constant power struggles within and a battling of hostile neighbours. Social cohesion was only maintained with difficulty, and the power structure of the societies necessitated social inequity and an attitude of exploitation.

In the larger civilisations new religions arose that assumed a constant battle between good and evil, with suffering on Earth and rewards and rectifications postponed to an afterlife. The trials and tribulations of societies where there were class distinctions and the exercise of arbitrary power had to be accepted, and organised religious institutions demanded blind faith and obedience in this life for a promised reward hereafter.

Through a rather chaotic process of ups and downs a cultural selection and intermittent passing on of technical improvements occurred. Urban life, although a miserable existence for many, and always dependent on an inward migration of rural people (as the many diseases of city life as well as the disruption and losses by war meant that city dwellers did not fully replace themselves) was maintained with difficulty.

On the margin of the earlier centres of civilisation, in medieval Europe, there was brought together sufficient technical knowledge, social cohesion and trading opportunities to bring about a reinforcing and progressive development. By looking outwards, successful city oriented societies developed, first from trade and then by conquest through superior weapons. Over time the city merchants became more powerful, centralising power and converting, absorbing or displacing the old land based aristocracy. Technological innovations enhanced production and increased the firepower and mobility of the armed forces, and nation states developed in Europe while European colonisation took place around the world. The mass of people within the European states were displaced from their traditional activities and exploited as factory workers or farm labourers. The rest of the world either suffered from an overwhelming migration of displaced Europeans, or were forced to become colonies that supplied raw materials to the Europeans while providing further outlets for the mass of industrial goods Europe produced.

Now virtually the whole world has been, or is in the process of being converted into nation states. Many of them have no common cultural heritage, but even those countries with old and well established cultures, such as India and China, are being driven by the prevailing technological imperative, and developing even more centralised and hierarchical societies.

Societies of social exploitation have given rise to a technology of exploitation, and this technology is colonising the world. The centralising of power gives rise to even larger states, but they remain as inherently hostile as before to other states that are also larger. Now there is no more world to colonise and to export our problems and growthmania to. The resources of the world are finite and there is no bottomless sink for our wastes. Our weapons are now of mass destruction, but our competitiveness is not only unchanged, it is heightened by each state's attempts to hold itself together.

Thus over a long period of time competitive, hierarchical societies struggled to maintain some form of centralised urban living, of 'civilisation'. Since the European renaissance, however, the trends within this type of society have not only been developed in a self-reinforcing manner, but this development has encompassed the whole world.

Centralisation has given rise to the massive bureaucracies of large nations, and even larger and more powerful transnational corporations. Consumption is dictated by the need to absorb production not to satisfy personal and social needs, and obsessive and ostentatious consumption and glorification extends throughout the more affluent nations. The bonds of family and community have been broken by constant movement and migration, and social relations are based instead on status and command, the impersonal transactions of markets and bureaucratic regulation. Urban living now predominates, and cities, with their anonymity, alienation and aloneness as well as stimulation and diversity, are growing enormously. Abstract concepts replace the personal loyalty and mutual interdependence of the close community.

At the same time, the expansion of physical and social opportunities, and the education required to run a technological society, has given rise to greater individual expression and demands for individual freedom. The rights of people to self expression and of minorities to a separate cultural identity and lifestyle, clashes with the exercise of power and centralisation of the state. There is an increasing tension between the individual and the state, that mirrors the increasing tension between the utilisation of resources and their pollution and despoilation.

The social dynamic of our society can not be simply turned around. The explosion of technology and the accompanying explosion of the human population is the outcome of a relatively successful accommodation of the conflicts within our social structure. But it is inevitably flawed, and in the longer term doomed to failure because it did not involve any fundamental changes that would <u>eliminate</u> the conflicts themselves.

CRISIS

The constant expression of power, that is the dynamo of social activity in competitive hierarchical societies, can no longer be fully absorbed by either colonisation or monument building. The bounds of a finite world have been reached. There are no new lands for conquest, while resource limitations are now restricting the conspicuous consumption and monument building of the powerful. The world is being divided into power blocks of associated large states, that are mutually exclusive and basically hostile. The whole world is affected by this power play, and the rearranging of the power blocks as influences wax and wane does nothing to change the essential competitive setup.

Within the large state there is a heightening tension between people of different cultures and beliefs, and between individual freedom and the governing of the state. The melting pot of peoples in the new states created by European colonisation, and now in the rapidly growing cities of the world, can only be maintained while rapid economic growth provides sufficient material rewards. Social cohesion is not based on shared experiences and a common understanding, rather it arises from a shared belief in opportunity, and through the dazzle and stimulants of urban living. When the rewards are no longer forthcoming or are insufficient to compensate for the miseries and dangers of city life, the cities will collapse due to a lack of basic social support.

Our present lifestyle is provided by a conflict ridden urban/ industrial society that has reached a crisis of social cohesion, and is unable to maintain social activity by the processes that are basic to its constitution. It uses a high energy exploitative technology that debases and destroys the resources that are basic to its functioning, while converting these resources into non recyclable wastes.

The epitome of the technology is the sophisticated military hardware and weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical and biological). There is an obvious competitiveness and rapidity of obsolescence, while the emphasis on military expenditure, and the fuelling of economic growth through this expenditure reflects the basic power structure of our societies.

War has now been extended to the whole population, there are no civilians. The front line is our homes and gardens. There are over 50000 nuclear bombs in the world today, and if they were let off evenly over the land mass of the Earth, the blast area of the bombs would cover that land mass more than once over. As well as the blast effects, there are those of radiation and of the consequential environmental impacts. Nuclear winter is just one possibility that arises from the most obvious environmental effect of a mass detonation - the resulting fires.

With a technology so out of control, the imminent sudden collapse of our way of life may well be thought highly desirable, and its coming to be fervently hoped for in the interests of humanity and life on Earth.

There has always been a cliff at the end of the road along which we have been travelling. Our civilisation would rise and fall through the same dynamics as all the

civilisations that have been developed within societies of the same hierarchical social structure. The tensions that constantly stimulate centralising urban societies and the development of their associated arts and technology, also ensure their collapse. In China, India and the Mediterranean there has been a fluctuating rise and fall of central power and urban culture. Periodic invasions from the hinterlands (mainly central Asia) has added to this dynamic, being a major cause of the destruction of some civilisations.

Our civilisation has achieved sufficient success to generate a much more extensive and powerful technology, and by encompassing the world, virtually eliminated the dangers of outside invaders. Instead we are caught in a spiralling technology of growth, and face off against each other in large power blocks. The empire building and colonisation has been so extensive, and the magnitude of energy utilisation and sophistication of technology so great, that there has been a quantum jump in the development of the prevailing civilisation. The stronger self-reinforcement of the initial development has given rise to a much more rapidly accelerating process. Energy use, technological change, urbanisation, centralisation of power, and individual and cultural self realisation are all increasing at a rapid and accelerating rate. The overshoot is this time, therefore, going to be so much more profound and extreme, while the potential for destruction of the whole fabric of human living has raised the possible impact of the collapse to a quite different order of magnitude.

A true crisis of our social arrangement, brought on by the very success of the present civilisation - which can only in the end draw out even more profoundly the inherent tensions and instability - must give rise to a catastrophic collapse. There is a deadly logic here that must be faced. The enormity of human suffering that a population collapse implies is horrible to contemplate. The severity of the impact on the whole fabric of life on Earth of the destruction associated with the death throes may be so great that the future of the human species, and many others besides, is imperiled. But if this is the fatal blind alley we have enclosed ourselves in, then we have no choice but to accept the inevitable consequences that follow from it, and go forward on that basis.

Our first lesson may need to be one of humility: to accept that we do not control our own destiny, and that we must take the consequences of our past actions. It is our pride and arrogance that has got us into the mess, and an arrogant assumption that we can simply turn around the whole process, and by-pass the inevitable consequences, may be no more than a demonstration of the reality of that conclusion.

There will, of course, be many types of reaction to the collapse, and fear and suffering will encourage the present hierarchical social structure. It is one, no doubt, of calamity and hardship, if not the only one. The social cohesion of fear and power will be utilised, with reliance on strong leaders and strict conformity to social rules and regulations. This will, though, continue hostilities and further destructive competition.

Any renewal of the basic human values of common decency and respect, of acceptance and cooperation, will not come about from a sudden widespread transformation of large societies. Evolutionary transformations come about within small groups that live at the margin. Under conditions of hardship or stress a

distinctly different arrangement arises that is given the opportunity to spread out and replace the original population by the collapse of that population - for whatever reason. It is a stem of transformation that blossoms out, radiating over the living space of the displaced species. In the human species there is a similar process with cultural transformations.

This process of evolutionary and social transformation means that a fundamental change in the structure of human society can not be brought about by 'saving' our present society, or the present vastly expanded human population. There is no such salvation on Earth. The natural justice that ensures the working through of the dynamic of any process that might be initiated and promoted, does not allow the arbitrary intervention of forgiveness and miraculous redemption.

The coming collapse of the prevailing social order does, however, give rise to an opportunity for fundamental renewal, for a new age. The inevitability of the collapse can then promote a reaching out for this opportunity. It, in fact, gives a message about responsible action. It may mean doom, but it can also engender hope, a real hope that sees a passing away of our present way of life of stress and conflict, and the threat of mass annihilation.

Humanity must pay the price of its abuse of the world but there is a hope for the future, and it is this hope that should now be directing the actions of responsible people.

COMMUNITY

There must be a focus around which a stem of renewal can form. Opportunity does not necessitate realisation. There are many possible outcomes in a crisis, in fact it is this indeterminacy of multiple outcomes that is characteristic of a crisis. Some groups of people must develop the necessary social medium that will carry forward the transforming influences, and give direction towards a particular outcome. This medium must be present at the time of the crisis, and must be, at least to some extent, preformed. The more developed it is, of course, the more likely it will succeed in its redirection of social activity and its associated structures. There will be many incipient developments and conflicting influences. The crisis only breaks the strength and dominance of past social structures and traditions, leaving open the realm of human social activity to the sudden development of new arrangements.

The medium of renewal will always be pushed to the margin by the established social system, and it must be brought into being and nurtured despite this constant marginalising pressure. If we commit ourselves to social transformation we must accept our exclusion from the established social institutions, and cope with the opposing pressures of conformity, of using established social means, of acting 'for the good of all'. Social pressures will be brought to bear to reabsorb any effective breaking away that generates a real counterposing social activity, while blocking or deflecting its influence.

Mutual support between people of like mind, who are committed to the nurturing of this social medium for a future realisation, is thus vital. It should obviously not be attempted at the social centre. At the same time social links must be maintained.

The stem that would bring about a later transformation must obviously contain the seeds of the social arrangement it is to engender. The medium must contain the message. In fact, it must in some manner contain it in a concentrated form, or have some essential aspect. It must be able to naturally propagate its basic pattern.

The social tension between individual development and self- realisation on the one hand, and the organisation of the state and the enlargement of the state power on the other, is a critical dynamic of our present social condition, and one of the most basic aspects of the crisis of society. There is a developing polarity between the individual and the state, with competing ideologies giving one or other the central place. The natural communities of mutual support and dependence that nurtures respect and responsibility are, meanwhile, being destroyed.

The essential element of a healthy society must be these communities, and the starting point of any process of renewal must be the rebuilding of such communities. To bring into being a new social order, though, these communities will have to be based on different social values to those prevailing, and different social arrangements - for decision making, for determining priorities, for resolving conflicts, and for exchanging goods and services - will have to be set up.

I believe we can find encouragement and guidance by looking far back into our past, and at some of the marginalised societies that are still intact. In many ways we are trying to reform the social base that was formed during the development of agricultural societies, and from that base develop a more complex society that maintains a balanced lifestyle. The dominant social order has, also, never fully displaced alternative arrangements. There are aspects of our traditions and cultural heritage that we can call upon. While many societies that are now marginalised by the recent European expansion are as hierarchical and power orientated as the prevailing European based societies, there are some marginalised cultures that do provide a living example and a source of inspiration.

The challenge is to bring into being a social arrangement that can sustain a more complex way of life with a sophisticated technology. A society made up of self reliant communities that can maintain a complex network of exchanges through a sustainable use of primary natural resources and well utilised renewing sources of energy.

A primary requirement has to be a shift in social values towards a more balanced expression of basic human values. A reestablishment of the suppressed aspects of our nature. Competition and hierarchy cannot and should not be eliminated. They have their place, but they have to be balanced by cooperation and sharing. Intuition must balance analysis, an emotional attachment and acceptance balance the will to action and adjustment. The feminine and masculine need to be complementary, with social roles being flexible and carried out to fulfil specific social requirements.

The society would have to be grounded on a basic acceptance and partnership, with influence stemming from recognition. There would have to be a social hierarchy, but people would carry out their social duties as part of a mutually supporting interrelationship where everyone saw themselves with a particular part to play to achieve social goals.

How this might be bought about we can not see at the present time, but we do not have to understand it all. It is sufficient to perceive the possibility, and how we might act so as to assist rather than hinder. We will always have to act from a limited perception and partial understanding, and any commitment necessarily involves an act of faith.

The forming of communities of people who work and live together, and the building up of a support network of people involved in such activities, obviously go hand in hand. The ideal would then be the formation of self reliant communities that had common values of partnership and stewardship, and provided for their own basic needs while generating a tradable surplus of useful goods and services. This could take place within our present society, and it would provide a real focus and practical example. A basic community orientation could be fostered, and alternative social arrangements arise naturally as part of the development of these essentially interdependent communities.

These communities can not by their very nature be imposed on people, and in reality are only likely to be developed from what are initially loose associations of families. What I want to encourage, then, is a supportive network of people who share this outlook, and want to actively promote community rebuilding. I believe it is at this level that we must put most of our effort. Even just a few families can start to form themselves into an effective communal association, and nurture their own type of relationships. There does not have to be a sudden complete change in ownership and decision making, such as with some types of commune arrangements. On the contrary, it is better if the community arises in an organic way, by increasing association through perceived mutual advantages.

To become an effective community, there must be a sharing and working together, with self-reliance in such basics as energy and food supplies being developed over time. To be successful foci of transformation these groups of people must have a real measure of independence from the established power structures, while sustaining links among themselves. They can then provide the supporting framework within which a positive struggle against the prevailing powers can be carried out. The communities do not have to be developed in rural areas, simply to be energy and food self-reliant, although urban communities would have to develop some sort of alliances with rural food and fibre producing people. In fact it would be easier at present to start up small communities in urban areas, by people buying up or building houses in close proximity to each other. The most important ingredient of the communities is the social interrelationships, and the building up of mutual support. Developing more self-reliance, in basic supplies and in tradable goods, can follow on.

Such nuclei would then act as attractors, demonstrating by example, and having the basic support to reach out into a wider community rebuilding.

I hope there is now a potential for this. Obviously it requires a real commitment, and an actual change in physical and social lifestyle. It is, though, something we can do - at a grassroots level - without waiting for any government actions. It is real action for change and can realistically be achieved by small numbers of people within our present circumstances. In my opinion it is the best way of bringing about desirable changes. Improving our own lives, while increasing our ability to bring about improvements in our society.

I think it is important to see that we are not trying to maintain or retain the present nation state type of society of present day New Zealand. The aim is to transform our way of life, and hence social structures, not maintain them through some reforming or rearrange that does not affect their essential nature. In spite of its small size, New Zealand society now shares the nation state make-up of the much larger nations. It may be geographically distinct [although the North and South Islands could have been two different countries, with different languages, if our colonisation history had been only a little different]. It is, though, intimately connected to the wider world, and highly dependent on its international trading and financial activities. It thus shares the same problems and suffers from the same inherent tensions.

We do, though, have some significant advantages in New Zealand. Not least is our low population density, and thus relative availability of land. In spite of our high degree of urbanisation there is still a strong rural influence and a perception of a more balanced and self reliant lifestyle. The small size and geographic isolation of New Zealand can be advantages in bringing about social change, once a significant process of change is generated.

Well functioning alternative communities with a network of their own could, then, develop sufficiently to influence a considerable proportion of the population. This could be important in moderating the actions of the central state. The sovereign state is small and distant from the main state powers, and if it can be influenced sufficiently internally the pressures on alternative communities may be relatively low. At the same time some degree of adjustment of the state as a whole may come about.

The place to start is in our own lives and in the rebuilding of human communities. This is what needs our commitment. We must be careful in not directing too much effort at changing governmental regulations and laws, or burn ourselves out in lobbying and other direct political actions. Instead of demanding changes from our society we must start rebuilding our own lives, and seeking our own solutions. We cannot do it alone, but we do not need to take everyone with us. In fact, this only deflects us and makes us all ultimately ineffective.

No doubt time is short. This is all the more reason we should stop seeking top down 'solutions', stop playing the game according to the existing rules, and start changing the game. We must leave behind the temptations of power and the illusions of instant change from governmental edicts, and step forth along the hard road of real transformation.

PHILOSOPHY

Rebuilding the essential community relations of human living is a practical activity, demanding of time, energy and commitment. It is a most effective form of local action, but depends on a natural organic process where opportunities must exist and then be further generated. As with all practical activities it is limited by the reality of the prevailing circumstances, and while we can make special efforts to bring about more conducive circumstances, there are many constraints.

Redirecting our thinking, and developing a more appropriate perception of the world we live in, and hence a better understanding of our part in it, is just as necessary. We very much need to reassess the way we look at the world, and this is best achieved through dialogue and mutual support in the contemplation of our lives and the world we live in. While action and thought should go together, we can at least make a start in reassessing our understanding of life without the benefit of a supportive community.

There are paradigm shifts taking place in the way we look at and understand our world, but the successful realisation of a new paradigm is not inevitable, nor is there necessarily just one paradigm shift that is in contention. In fact descriptions in terms of opposing dualisms is a fundamental part of the prevailing world view, and to counterpose one 'new' way of thinking against the 'old' way is to remain very much within the 'old' ways! Our thinking - and thus our values and behaviour - is certainly changing, but we are in the midst of a rethinking process, and it is far from clear where we are going and where we should be going. Real processes of change are not made up of polar opposites, and if we are to have any true understanding of present processes the first thing we must do is stop thinking in such terms.

We must leave behind reaction and an adversarial promotion of one side against another, and strive for an appropriate vision to guide us through these difficult times. We need a clearer understanding of where we are heading, and what are the nature of the processes we are involved in, so we can take effective action. The following comments are some of my ideas on these most basic questions of human understanding.

A constant use of dualities seems to be an inevitable outcome of an analytical subject-object approach. Our present language makes it nearly impossible to discuss any topic without using dualities. They are everywhere - in our minds : good/evil, right/wrong, correct/incorrect, body/mind, physical/spiritual, introvert/extrovert, intellect/emotions, intuitive/analytical, order/disorder, fact/fiction, cooperation/competition.

There is a definite duality in our make up. Our physical body has a mirror symmetry of left and right - from our hands and legs to the sides of our brains. There is an obvious sexual duality in life of male and female. But there is a complex diversity behind this superficial duality, which is too often neglected.

We also tend to line up these dualities. For instance, the masculine/feminine distinction is often associated with many of the other dualities, and instead of giving

recognition to the full range and dynamics of sexual relations and the complementary nature of the sexual distinction, there is a severe separation of attributes and roles. We even start to associate a side of our brains with our sex. Sexual distinction then becomes part of the power play, with men seeking to dominate women. The same happens with cultural differences. Interpersonal relations generally are marked by a 'us-them' attitude, with a constant taking up of opposing positions. In any situation of potential conflict the organisational structure of society tends towards a perverse conflict generation instead of conflict resolution. The court system, for instance, is based on the advocacy of two opposing parties, and the finding for one party to the exclusion of, or against, the other party. It is essentially adversarial, and the lawyers, who are the professionals of this system, gain by promoting conflicts not by resolving them.

Our ethics are based on absolutes of right and wrong, and we assume that some person or organisation is responsible for any misfortune we suffer. It is a world view of accusation; of black and white.

At the most fundamental level of our perception of reality there is a prevailing division of subject/object. Everything is divided up into separate objects, which we, as the observing subjects, manipulate for our advantage. The models of reality that have been built up are based on the interaction of these rigidly defined objects which act in a clear determinate manner. The perceiving person, as the subject, does not influence the course of events, and spatially defined objects undergo distinct exchanges over time in a direct cause and effect manner. The scientific world view is then essentially mechanistic, and the emphasis on quantitative analysis limits scientific thinking to simplistic linear processes.

This view of reality, and the ethics derived from it, are inherent in societies based on dominance. The rigid hierarchy and command structure, the status generation through the exercise of power and its patterns of conflict, the class structure and imperialism, the subjugation of women and cultural minorities, the exclusion of peoples of other cultures from ethical consideration - they all fit together with a subject/object view of the world and an imposed morality of ordained right and wrong. The natural world, in spite of our utter dependence on it, is treated in the same way. It is there to be subjugated, and all the vastness of nature is beyond the realm of care and recognition. There is a pervading mind set that is socially determined and which influences all our thinking without us realising it.

The theory of evolution, for example, is structured in terms of dominance and survival, and this is a reflection of our mind set, not a necessary fact of reality. The theories of physics are spoken about as innate laws of reality, fixed and immutable in the way we have written them. That they are merely human description, framed within a particular value system and way of perceiving reality, we conveniently forget. We thus constantly confuse ourselves, because we can not seem to differentiate between our claims about reality, and the actual processes of reality that continue to take place without regard to our descriptions of them.

The solutions that have been proposed to remedy the problems of domination societies remain within the world viewpoint of that social setup. The path to the classless society of communism is seen in terms of the replacement of one

dominating class with another. But a class society will only wither away through the elimination of the social conditions generating class and the domination power structure, not through the imposition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead of confronting the dominant power within the rules they have established, we should be circumventing the present game plan.

Deep ecology proposes a valuation that goes beyond human interests to the non-human, in order to protect other species from destruction. But the imputing of 'intrinsic' values to other creatures and life forms maintains the human viewpoint, and a human control over all other life forms is still assumed. Despite its claims, it remains deeply anthropocentric, and in fact extends human arrogance from its usual stand point of selfish greed to a God-like one of custodianship of life on Earth. As communism shares the same social dynamic as capitalism, deep ecology shares the same ethical basis as established prescriptive religions. Instead of extending human evaluation to encompass non-human interest we need to appreciate our limitations and very partial understanding. It is not for us to judge the world, on the contrary we will be judged through the inevitable consequences of our behaviour. The living system that supports our lives will continue to do so if we recognise our (limited) part in it, and keep within the bounds of that participation. It is not a matter of whether we can save other life forms, it's whether the living system will continue to function in a way that saves us. We will naturally give other species the space to live in when we have been weaned from our overbearing pride and start to take a more mature place within the living system of the Earth.

The above descriptions themselves, of course, suffer from the dualism of our language, and share the tendency towards polar exaggeration. Societies are never so uniform or monopolistic. Their dynamics always allow for some diversity, and the larger and more complicated they become the greater the internal strains and divergence.

There is shared knowledge and social traditions that have fundamentally different approaches, and a re-searching and resurgence of alternative approaches is occurring. One alternative viewpoint does accept the intimate interaction and constant flux of life, and sees any part as only partially distinct and always maintaining its links with the wider world. The perception of reality is then more wholistic, with any part being seen as an open functioning system that constantly interacts, and in doing so reflects its supporting environment. Influences both strong and subtle permeate the whole system, and there is a complex flux of influences that have an order and a natural hierarchy of functions, but in which no one aspect remains dominant.

In this viewpoint we live in an open universe that is essentially creative, and the meaning of life comes from a creative fulfilment of our potential. Far from being determinate, there is a fundamental unpredictability and newness, and it is the path we tread that is important rather than some final goal. Meaning arises directly from the sense of belonging, from a basic acceptance of life and our role, and the contemplation of the patterns and transformations of life.

Life is described through a more complex conceptual arrangement that reflects the patterns of reality. Logical consistency is tempered by an intuitive appreciation of

reality, with analysis being constantly tested against experience. Thought, emotion and action flow together, and truth arises through living rather than in abstractions.

The dark forebodings and death wish of our alienation will only disappear when we stop thinking in 'us-them' terms and give up our search for meaning in domination, in a constant growth of power and influence, and the seeking of an illusionary goal of absolute satiation. The destruction of life goes hand in hand with the destruction of everything that supports our life and nourishes us, and gives rise to a meaningless void that no amount of substitutes and displacement activity can ever fill.

To get off the vicious treadmill an act of faith is needed. We must take the plunge, shed our tightly bound armour and accept our vulnerability as we re-seek the meaning of life and reestablish our being (or on-going becoming) within the fabric of life, in its unending diversity and endless unity.

We do not have the right perception or correct understanding, but we may seek it together in good faith.

NETWORKS

A conscious awareness and the ability to foresee and weigh up the consequences makes us human. To exercise our humanity we must accept our responsibility, for our own actions and for other people. For this we must seek an appropriate understanding, and have the faith and courage to act.

Within a society in crisis we need to find the appropriate ways of promoting a better way of life. In my opinion that requires a social transformation, so that in overcoming the problems of environmental despoilation and social alienation we also develop a more equitable society and a lifestyle that is more personally satisfying. Hence the need for a fundamental and encompassing process of social change, that involves a change in people's values, in the organisation of society and in the type of technology we use. The kernel of this transformative process must, in my opinion, be self-reliant mutually supportive communities.

Top down directives for change will just about inevitably be negative, as they will be restrictive rather than enabling. For a positive life-enhancing process of change, a bottom up community based development is essential. Then within that process a diversity of other social actions can be undertaken.

The threads of a positive community based transformation are coming together. But the opportunity has to be taken, and this requires responsible human action. Hard personal choices have to be made, and within a negative atmosphere of confusion, fear and despair, there must be a commitment to a different way of life.

In N.Z. the Values Party first put together the outlines of this alternative. It stressed the need for a change in values, and while its message was that the survival of our society and even of humanity was at stake, there was a viable alternative that would give rise to an enhanced lifestyle.

The Values Party did, however, gravely underestimate the social and political difficulties of bringing about what was in essence a social transformation. There was constant debate in the party over the emphasis on political action or community activity - it was a vitalising tension. I now believe that the emphasis needs to be on changing our personal lifestyles, <u>within the context</u> of the rebuilding of communities that are based on appropriate values for healthy balanced human living. While activity at a political level can be maintained, it must be seen as an adjunct to community based activity. The burn-out of political party and lobbying activity was a salient lesson of the Values Party. Such activity can all too easily become overly absorbing of personal energies, destroying a sense of perspective and taking much needed energy away from community based activities.

To assist in community rebuilding, including small groups forming distinct communities and the more ad hoc community support activities within existing "communities", I believe it is important that good networks are developed and fostered through relatively formal communication links. A cross linking of existing formal or informal networks and a sharing of ideas and information would be particularly helpful.

What I am proposing then is a generalised network that will bring people together in different ways as opportunity allows. The contact would be aimed at assisting us in the philosophical rethinking and the practical community building, with a linking together of thought and action. Taking a wholistic approach, such a network would be flexible in form, self-organising with diverse feedback links, and promote synthesis and balance.

The people within such a network should, given its aims, share a vision of a partnership society that was based on common human decencies and respect for oneself and others. There would have to be a recognition of the inherent relativity of values and the need to accept and be tolerant of the different beliefs of others, while maintaining and promoting one's own beliefs.

There would be an acceptance of the extraordinary nature of our present circumstances, and the inevitability of a collapse of the present social order. And there would be a hope in the opportunity this gives for a real transformation of human societies.

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