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## *In this issue:*

<b>Roots of a New Society:</b>		
<b>Peter Maurin and Agronomic Universities</b>	<b>Eric Anglana</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quotations from Purton Today</b>	<b>John Papworth</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Down to Earth: A Guide to the New Home Economics</b>	<b>Frances Hutchinson</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Sustainable Agriculture and the European Union</b>	<b>Sir Julian Rose</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>The Work of Local Culture</b>	<b>Wendell Berry</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Islamic Terrorism</b>	<b>John Pilger</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Meditation in Memory of Adolf Eichmann</b>	<b>Thomas Merton</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Wealth-Producing Maniacs</b>	<b>Peter Maurin</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Book Reviews</b>		<b>21</b>

## *Editorial*

Material and technological progress has delivered unprecedented violence, poverty, disease and insecurity. For all the finance poured into 'defence', armaments, law and order, and personal security, humanity stands peculiarly bereft of both common law and common sense. The economic system is based upon the claim that individuals are free to make the best of the hand they are dealt. Yet it is difficult to claim in all honesty that self-interest will, through the play of the Invisible Hand, provide peace and plenty for all in the long run. As John Pilger's article demonstrates, 'Islamic terrorism' is the invented excuse for theft of Africa's riches'. The corporate world has the ability to infiltrate governments. Furthermore, corporate control of the news media ensures that the ordinary, thinking, concerned person in the street has very little by way of the truth upon which to base their judgements. In weighing up their options in the economic and political spheres, they are faced with a *fait accompli*. And this is because the cultural institutions of the modern world – the schools and universities – and the mass media, are all in hock to the finances created and dispensed by the corporate world.

All three spheres of the social order currently run in accord with each other. The belief system of the cultural/educational/spiritual world says it is correct to work for money in order to put food on the table. At the same time, the rights sphere allows private ownership of property in the tools and materials of production – the factories, mines, and the common cultural inheritance of IT - so that those who own nothing must sell their services to the highest bidder. They have neither the knowledge nor ability to do anything else.

This was not so in medieval times. Although we cannot turn the clock back, we certainly can take a less biased look at the history and evolution of the institutions which presently dominate our economic affairs. When the Church was the centre of the English village, a very different value system held sway. Learning and crafts were in keeping both with knowledge of the land and its seasons and with a full appreciation of the spiritual dimension of humanity. The notion of common law underpinned traditional land rights in the England of those days, so that the ability of an absentee landlord to claim ownership of land, and the produce of labour on that land, was virtually non-existent. This period of English history could usefully be studied through the

many scholarly texts available, as indicated in the Autumn issue of *The Social Crediter* and in *Down to Earth: A Guide to the New Home Economics* (forthcoming).

Quite by chance, I recently came across a letter sent to me in 1998 by a reader of the then recently published *What Everybody Really Wants to Know About Money*. Jackie was very diffident about expressing an opinion, feeling that one requires academic qualifications to enter into debate. She was interested in my book because:

“I’ve spent so long thinking I must be daft (that’s how people describe someone who doesn’t think there’s much sense in the way things are run nowadays) that it’s great to see that economic orthodoxy is being challenged so rigorously. . . . (B)ut some of what passes for scientific thought is such obvious tosh, especially when considered on a global basis, that I can hardly believe we run our society around it. A Polish friend used to remind people that in the end we have only the land and what we can grow, and that to forget our ‘peasant’ roots could prove dangerous. He hadn’t forgotten his, and was amazed that people now live such ‘artificial’ lives, not seeking the connections, consequences and the ‘reality’ any more. As you said, there are no easy answers, but a look at the irrationality of what we’re doing is long overdue.”

Since Jackie wrote that letter it has become increasingly apparent that academia has not launched a review of the “‘irrationality’ of what

we are doing”. Hence there is no alternative to local discussion of local issues, alongside hands-on practical schemes designed to turn around local economies in all parts of the globe. If world resources and world technologies come to serve local needs as perceived by local people, it will become possible to break free from the ‘modern serfdom’ so ably depicted by Sir Julian Rose. Realistically, for that to happen it will be necessary for us to educate ourselves - and most importantly our children - in a very different philosophical approach to life than the endemic wages/salaries system. That system trains individuals to become highly skilled within a narrow profession, whilst denying them the ability to see the overall picture.

The holistic picture cannot be reviewed on a global level. It must emerge from local people creating new local structures and information flows. That will be achieved through systematic study, dovetailed with practical work on the land. As Eric Anglana demonstrates, the concept of an ‘Agrarian University’ is not new. It merely needs adaptation to fit with the many local initiatives already emerging. All that is necessary is to culture those green shoots in your own locality, wherever you happen to be. Perhaps, in the near future, we will see examples of such initiatives reviewed in these pages.

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## Roots of a New Society: Peter Maurin and Agronomic Universities

*Eric Anglana*

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### **Growing Roots**

“The time for the agronomic university,” Catholic Worker theologian Michael Baxter declared, “has finally arrived.” We were a group of twenty adults, mostly Catholic Workers, gathered at New Hope Catholic Worker Farm in Iowa for a week of learning through manual labor, prayer, lecture, and discussion on our 28-acre parcel of land that is home to four families, several dairy cows, flocks of chickens and turkeys, bees, and a half acre of organic gardens and fruit trees. We called our week together *Growing Roots*, for it was our attempt to dig deeper into the intellectual,

spiritual, and agrarian core of the Catholic Worker—and explore its meaning today. Each day we awoke at 6:30am to milk the cow, feed the chickens, take a walk, or pick berries, then came together at 8am to pray the Daily Office and eat breakfast. The next three hours were devoted to the “intellectual,” during which Michael Baxter and Sheila McCarthy, both from the Catholic Worker in South Bend, Indiana, led us in discussions on various topics, including “The Intellectual Foundations of the Catholic Worker,” “Alisdair MacIntyre and Permaculture,” “Peter Maurin, Tradition, and Herbal Medicine,”

and “The Integrating Visions of Hildegard of Bingen and Ade Bethune.” After lunch and a leisurely rest, we devoted another three hours to engaging creation and our bodies. The work was varied, ranging from splitting wood and weaving baskets to harvesting vegetables and identifying wild edibles in the woods. After the work period, for those interested, Sheila led an hour-long yoga session, while another participant, a massage therapist and aspiring Catholic Worker farmer, treated many participants to a two-hour deep-tissue massage. The close of the day found us around the bonfire, playing music and singing.

In our daily schedule we found a rhythm together, a kind of symmetry between our head and our hands that encompassed the genuine experience of being human. Peter Maurin’s dream of an agronomic university, we felt, was being brought to life.

### **Peter Maurin and Education**

Peter Maurin was once invited to speak at a meeting where he was introduced as Dr Maurin. His hearers, impressed, asked from which university he had graduated. “Union Square,” Peter responded with a grin on his face, indicating the place where he had gone for years to rankle communists and debate economics, politics, and religion with anyone who walked by. This story—one of many amusing anecdotes in the Maurin canon—illustrates Peter’s delight in being an intellectual, but not an academic. Largely self-educated, Peter, while engaged in itinerant, manual labor across the United States, pursued a life of learning, reading voraciously in a wide variety of disciplines that included philosophy, politics, history, theology, economics, and agriculture. It was during those years of exploration that he distilled his ideas on thought, action, and education into his catchy and deceptively simple *Easy Essays*.

In his attempt to foment a “Green Revolution” (as opposed to the communists’ “Red” revolution), Peter naturally sought out professors who might help him shed some light on the societal ills of the day. However, it was in his discussions with such professors that Peter became disillusioned with the limits of the university:

A few years ago,  
I asked a college professor  
to give me  
the formulation  
of those universal concepts  
embodied  
in the universal message  
of universal universities  
that will enable  
the common man  
to create  
a universal economy.  
and I was told  
by the college professor:  
“That is not my subject.”  
Colleges and universities  
give to the students  
plenty of facts  
but very little understanding.  
They turn out specialists  
knowing more and more  
about less and less.

When visiting colleges, Peter tried to make what he called “a rumpus on the campus,” but found, much to his chagrin, that there was less interest in changing history than in teaching it. When he visited the University of Wisconsin, for instance, Peter was told by a professor that “schools reflect the environment, they don’t create it.” In a letter to a friend of the Catholic Worker and a professor at St. Louis University, Peter encouraged him to found a “School of Catholic Agitation” which could turn out “Masters of Agitation.” (Unsurprisingly, the professor did not follow up on the suggestion.)

In pursuing “clarification of thought” with professors, it became readily apparent to Peter that the university was mired in “specialization,” in mastering subjects instead of situations, and that it was futile to pursue there the necessary unity of disciplines that could provide a theoretical foundation for a new society. No one in the university was creating what Peter called a “correlative knowledge” – a combination not only of serious thought, discussion and study, but also prayer, cultivation of the soil, community, and hospitality.

Peter soon considered the university system synonymous with officialdom, fragmentation,

the disembodied mind, competitive learning, exclusivity, bank accounts, wages, debt, and insurance policies. The university promulgated the vast gulfs between thought and action, academia and Union Square, scholars and workers. So, in his own existential explorations, Peter set out to bridge those gaps and become a dynamic “worker-scholar.”

In the early days of the [Catholic] Worker, Peter paid considerable attention to the intellectual life, a life that he sought to decentralize via study clubs, speakers’ series, numerous round-table discussions – planned or otherwise – and, of course, a newspaper. But these were merely steps on the road to the integrative approach on the land that was the agronomic university. He saw education not simply as engaging the intellect; it was, more fundamentally, an engagement with our whole being. Peter could never have been accused of being in the “ivory tower.” Observers frequently recounted how he could just as easily have been found traveling the country talking to professors as he could have been seen breaking rock, hoeing the garden, praying before the Blessed Sacrament, or giving his coat to someone poorer than himself in the slums of New York City.

The agronomic university would be a place not only to study but also to work and build practical skills. “In the Catholic Worker,” Peter wrote, “people learn to use their hands, as well as their heads.”

To Peter, the agronomic university — a phrase he himself coined — would be the antidote to the confusions of the entire complex of American educational institutions. Like all of his ideas, however, Peter never systematized his thoughts regarding such a university, allowing his hearers the opportunity to discern how they could flesh out the ideas. What is clear, though, is that he thought that the agronomic university (which, at times, he also called the Parish Subsistence Camp, the Outdoor University, and the Catholic Workers’ School) would be the path forward.

### **Influences and Models**

Peter Maurin was hardly original in viewing a more radical approach to education and learning as the key to creating a new society. The list of

those who have sought, not to reform the system, but to create alternatives to it, reads virtually like a “who’s who” of 20th century radicalism: Paul Goodman, Leo Tolstoy, Emma Goldman, Jacques Ellul, Gustav Landauer, Ivan Illich, Wendell Berry, and Derrick Jensen, among others. What was particular about Peter’s vision, however, were the eclectic influences – which ranged across the centuries and included his contemporaries, Catholic or otherwise – and the attention he gave so emphatically to all dimensions of the human person: body, mind and spirit.

While Peter could not find light in modern schooling, he did find it, ironically, in the Dark Ages, with the Irish monks of the seventh century. He might say that these monks, devoted to the study and transcription of the classics and creating livelihoods on the land through manual labor, emboldened by a firm dedication to prayer and ascetical practices, founded the first agronomic universities. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Irish had created pockets of an integrated way of life that blended spirituality, scholarship and manual labor. Always one to synthesize ideas into memorable phrases, Peter began emphasizing “cult, culture, and cultivation,” as his theoretical heart, which he translated as prayer, study and agriculture. This synthesis served as the keystone of his agronomic university.

Peter’s confrere in the movement, Dorothy Day, recalled that upon their meeting she noticed that Peter had the books of St. Francis in one pocket and Peter Kropotkin in the other. The latter, a Russian biologist, printer, gardener, writer and anarchist, played a large role in Peter’s idea of the agronomic university. It was in Kropotkin’s *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, detailing his ideas on building an anarchist society, that Peter found crucial insights into an “integral education.” In the preface, Kropotkin wrote,

“...the sum total of well-being can be obtained when a variety of agricultural, industrial, and intellectual pursuits are combined in each community.” Later, in his chapter titled “Brain Work and Manual Work,” he states, “Through the eyes and the hand to the brain”—this is the true principle of economy of time in teaching.”

The tradition of folk schools in Denmark antedated Peter's notion of the agronomic university by over 100 years, and was a valuable catalyst in inspiring Peter's enthusiasm for the agronomic university. Longing for a restoration of folk traditions within the Catholic Worker movement and beyond, Peter saw folk schools as superior to the American way of learning. Their pedagogy was a blend of craft, theory, and work that were available to both children and adults. Peter was especially drawn to their traditional songs and dancing. In an interview in 1943, Peter reflected on the folk schools' way of education: "Through [their] dances the child comes to see the necessity of co-operation with other children to perform the dances... The song brings ideas to the mind in an attractive way." And, as we shall see below, folk schools explicitly influenced some of the early agronomic university experiments.

During the first decade of the Catholic Worker movement there existed other models of education with which Peter was impressed. Grailville, for example, a lay Catholic women's organization centered in Ohio, began a community on the land that developed alternative educational courses. One such course was "The Harvest," an annual three-week course that Dorothy, on retreat from the house in New York, attended. Reflecting on her time there, she wrote effusively: "We have learned to meditate and bake bread, pray and extract honey, sing and make butter, cheese, cider, wine and sauerkraut." Doubtless Peter was pleased to hear that his cohort understood the fullness of what he was attempting with the agronomic university.

Ade Bethune was a Catholic Worker artist whose work and life Peter and Dorothy deeply admired. In the 1930s she moved to Newport, Rhode Island, where she created a small lay community of craftswomen that she called Lions College. They lived very simply, raising their own food, while honing skills in drawing, wood engraving, and repairing furniture. Ade was devoted to the intellectual life as well, frequently writing for the *Catholic Art Quarterly* and corresponding with the leading Catholic intellectuals of her day. Peter was impressed, jokingly calling her school "The Regressive School of Backward Studies." (Notably, Dorothy's daughter, Tamar, spent time at her school.)

A monastery outside of Washington, DC, also caught the attention of Peter who, inspired by its example, wrote an *Easy Essay* about its members:

... the Missionaries  
of the Holy Trinity  
combine manual labor  
with intellectual pursuits.  
They go to the Catholic University  
in the morning,  
build their own campus  
or cultivate their land  
in the afternoon  
and do their homework  
in the evening.  
While they do manual labor  
their mind is taken off their studies,  
which is to the benefit  
both of their health  
and their studies.  
[In this monastery]  
scholars try to be workers  
and workers  
try to be scholars.

Though he witnessed other examples of alternative education – such as his friend Ralph Borsodi's School of Living in New York and Eric Gill's lay monastic craft village called Ditchling – Peter felt that the full embodiment of cult, culture, and cultivation frequently eluded them. "If too much attention is paid to one to the detriment of the other," Peter cautioned, "things go wrong. There must be a balance."

### The Agronomic University Then

Finally, in 1940, four years after the founding of the Catholic Worker Farm in rural Pennsylvania, it began, to an unprecedented degree, to fill in the broad brush strokes of Peter's vision. The agronomic university was no longer simply an idea. That summer, about 10 adults from all over the country descended onto the farm in search of a balanced learning environment. The pedagogy, one participant noted, was "very different than the American system." One person would read from a text [e.g. Christopher Dawson's *Making of Europe*] and then would stop as people commented, leading to discussion. During the day the participants would also help with the workings of the farm, such as pitching hay or picking cherries.

As the summer developed, Peter set out to formalize a schedule, which he posted and began to adhere to. It read as follows:

5 to 7am, work in the fields;  
7 to 9am, Mass;  
9 to 10am, breakfast;  
10 to 11am, lecture or discussion;  
11am to 2pm, rest or study;  
2 to 3pm, lecture or discussion;  
4 to 5pm, lesson in handicrafts;  
5 to 8pm, work in the fields;  
8 to 9pm, dinner;  
9pm to 5am, sleep.

The summer school session was a success. Enthralled with the realization of his dream, the next summer Peter again pursued the agronomic university, this time on Catholic Worker farms outside of Cleveland, Ohio, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. The summer school in Ohio explicitly drew on the folk school tradition discussed above. One of the members of the community, Dorothy Gauchat, reminisced: “[W]e’d have liturgy, we’d have breakfast, we’d have work sessions, and then we would have Peter, and then a period with Ade Bethune and her artists. . . . The evenings were always for recreation and for folk dancing.” The folk school lasted for only two summers, however, before the breakout of World War II.

As a result of the war, after the initial bursts of energy in pursuit of the agronomic university, life on the Catholic Worker farms began to ebb. Not long after, Peter suffered a stroke, and in 1949, he died on the feast of St. Isidore the Farmer. Shortly after Peter’s death, at the commencing of the new Catholic Worker farm in New York, Dorothy Day wrote an essay entitled, “Idea of an Agronomic University.” In it she lamented, “We have had study weeks, as well as retreats, but there has not been enough emphasis on the agronomic university ideal of Peter.” In the conclusion of her essay, however, Dorothy strikes a more optimistic note: “The idea of work, the land, man’s needs. The study of what others are doing, the lives of great Christians—a sharing in other words with each other, in love and work, thought and worship, all this will be part of the life here on our beginnings of an agronomic university.” Regrettably, the agronomic university

failed to live up to her hopes, and even with its fits and starts throughout her life, Dorothy did not live to see the flourishing of her mentor’s full vision.

### **The Agronomic University Today**

Slowly, but perceptibly, more than sixty years after the loss of Peter, agronomic universities are once again being taken seriously, both within and outside of the Catholic Worker movement. And not simply as communities or family farms on the land—as the vast majority of Catholic Worker Farms have been—but as the more holistic training centers that Peter sought.

Most recently, New Hope Catholic Worker Farm hosted a Craft Gathering, one of six that have occurred in the last three years in Iowa. We shared a variety of crafts, from basket weaving and shoemaking to candle making and window quilting – as well as prayer, meals, dancing, live music, and a discussion of “craft as resistance.” One participant noted commented, “The craft retreat had a profound impact on me because it is truly humanizing to be doing creative work in the company of friends. It felt so sane to me, so wonderfully human to be doing crafts together.”

In addition to the *Growing Roots* school session discussed above, New Hope has also hosted numerous shorter workshops such as *Families in the Catholic Worker*, *Gandhian Integral Nonviolence*, a retreat on Thomas Merton, and a writing workshop, among others. This summer we will host another week of *Growing Roots*, focused on Peter Maurin and Economics.

Further south, the *Possibility Alliance* in Missouri is beginning a serious push towards the agronomic university, hosting over 40 short workshops throughout the growing season. This community, based largely on Lanza del Vasto’s Community of the Arc (a community one could argue which has more successfully done the agronomic university than the Catholic Worker), is attempting to create a village independent of fossil fuels and electricity, while training for nonviolent resistance and doing service. The community also teaches more extensive workshops on natural building and permaculture, and each year trains several apprentices and countless visitors.

Peter believed that before we could experience a revolution, we needed a theory of revolution. As history is dynamic and changing, we need to constantly update our understanding of how to live, and ask ourselves who Peter might be reading today. Perhaps he would read Wendell Berry, who writes, “Educated minds, in the modern era, are unlikely to know anything about food and drink or clothing and shelter.” He and other such agrarian intellectuals would agree that if we are to build a new society in today’s world, where so many are dependent on Empire to meet our basic needs, it is imperative that we learn how to grow our own food, build our own homes, think critically, treat one another compassionately, and deepen our commitments to a spiritual tradition – in short, to experience the fullness of what it means to be human.

**Conclusion—A New St. Benedict?**

During our *Growing Roots* school session discussed above, Michael Baxter read the last pages of Alisdair MacIntyre’s seminal *After Virtue*:

“A crucial turning point in [the decline of the Roman empire] occurred when men and women of good will turned aside from the task of shoring up the Roman imperium and ceased to identify the continuation of civility and moral community with the maintenance of that imperium. What they set themselves to achieve instead. . . was the construction of new forms of community

within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness. . . [W]e too have reached that turning point. What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us. . . We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict.”

Peter already saw, more than forty years before MacIntyre, that we are in fact living in a new Dark Age. His agronomic universities, inspired in large part by the Irish in that other, earlier Dark Age, prefigured those “local forms of community within which. . . the intellectual and moral life [could] be sustained” of which MacIntyre speaks. Perhaps Peter was that new St. Benedict, and our failure to create healthy, sustainable agronomic universities has contributed to the mess in which we now find ourselves. Like the Benedictines who followed after St. Benedict laid the foundations for a new society, it is now up to us to renew the vision of Peter Maurin. Let us hope that the time of the agronomic university has indeed finally arrived.

Eric Anglada 2011

This article first appeared in *Jesus Radicals*

<http://www.jesusradicals.com/roots-of-a-new-society-peter-maurin-and-the-agronomic-university/>

“One of the infuriating features of modern life is the way it has opened the doors of knowledge to an extent enabling everyone, yes everyone, to become expert in almost any aspect of learning. Do you want to know all about the conditions of the Arctic winter? The vegetation of tropical rainforests? The breeding systems of multi-legged caterpillars? The chemistry of solar rainbows or the religious convictions of Australian tribal systems? It’s all there nowadays for the taking on our TV programmes; we can become profoundly learned on any subject of our choice which former generations would only make available as an exclusive privilege to senior classes of scholarship.

“Today the world can become one vast university of which we can all become its students and professors. Yet instead we bury ourselves by the millions in triviality, in organized games involving players flying across the entire world in pursuit of a leather ball or some trophy, or in similar inanities involving the diminution of our human stature.”

John Papworth  
from *Purton Today*  
[www.purtonmagazine.co.uk](http://www.purtonmagazine.co.uk)

# Down to Earth: A Guide to the New Home Economics

Frances Hutchinson

## *Ch 1: History and the Three Spheres of Society*

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History is like a spring morning, impossible to describe from a single perspective. Many different individuals recorded events in their various times and different places. Others interpreted and distilled those accounts, often under the patronage of successful players in the game of politics, so that it becomes all too easy to dismiss the whole subject as a boring irrelevance. It can be argued that now is the time to get on with planning the future. Forget the past.

On the contrary, however, the stark reality is that without an understanding of the past there is no possibility that the social institutions under which we live at present, can be adapted purposefully to alternative ends. The entire social framework of the present has been inherited from the past. Individuals work together through an interlocking network of institutions, none of which can be reformed without distorting the entire edifice. The first essential, therefore, is to take a long hard look at various versions of the evolution of the social framework of global corporatism.

### **The Myth of Progress**

The version of history commonly taught in mainstream educational establishments across the globe today can be viewed from three perspectives: political, economic and spiritual.

**Political history** tells the story of urban settlements such as those of ancient Greece and Rome, with their wars and conquests of lands, kings and emperors. After the Dark Ages in Europe more leaders emerged to fight over control of lands, building and destroying urban settlements until eventually geographical areas were united to form the nations of Europe. In due course the European Union came along. But that, after all, it is nothing but an *economic* union.

**Economic history** is the story of the technological progress which has made possible the modern Machine Age. In the bad old days (so the story goes) everyone had to dig the soil in all weathers, day in and day out, grubbing about for a living. They went about in rags, and what little food they

managed to procure was forcefully seized by the aristocracy. Nobody lived long, and children died off in droves from hunger and disease. Along came the new agrarian technologies, opening up the possibility of mass production and monocultural farming. Freed from having to work on the land, people could now leave their homes to work in factories where the ‘division of labour’ operated (see Adam Smith). New inventions followed one another in dazzling array – canals, mills, mines, potteries, textiles, railways, roads, steel mills, coal mines, electricity, air travel, electronic communications, and of course bombs, armaments and tanks. Under the division of labour, underpinned by the wages system, everyone does a little bit, and there’s plenty for everyone. All can enjoy the benefits of health and safety, hygiene and the internet – if they just keep right on working (for money).

**Spiritual history** is merely alluded to indirectly within the formal educational institutions. In ancient times each generation was taught the story of their past in terms of divine interventions guiding the deeds of their ancestors. These teachings involved guidelines on good practice, fair dealings, justice, loyalty and respect, and their counterparts of evil, malice and betrayal. There were right and wrong ways of doing things. Furthermore, there was some ridiculous notion that the person who became king, whether by conquest or heredity, was so placed by a divine being, in which case he was expected to rule over his people in justice and equity, according to the laws of the land. The Divine Right of Kings, if taught at all, is presented as one of the more ridiculous notions of the pre-modern political economy.

Modern educational institutions convey the impression that the story of economic history, as they present it, is all there is to know. According to this recently invented myth, material progress is the only yardstick with which to evaluate social action. Economic progress makes everybody better off. If more and more things are made, it won’t be long before everybody has enough.

Then each individual will be able to make his or her choices about political and spiritual matters in perfect freedom from dogma, superstitions and all the paraphernalia of moral philosophy. For the time being, just keep working for money under the orders handed out to you, so that when we reach the end of history – which is just around the corner – you can sit back and enjoy it. There is nothing beyond the material, so talk of justice, peace, fair dealings and rights balanced by obligations, is so much hogwash.

### Rural and Urban Economies

Historians of politics, economics and society have so far failed to account the existence of two parallel economies – the rural and the urban. Throughout human history, the rural economy could have existed perfectly well without towns, cities, fortifications, roads, railways, sea-going galleons, armies, warfare, new electronic means of communication and all the paraphernalia of so-called ‘civilisation’. The same cannot be said for the urban economy. No civilisation, however sophisticated, can survive in complete independence of the rural village economy. For the small-scale city states of the type described by Leopold Kohr<sup>1</sup>, the dependence of the urban upon the rural could be taken as read. Accordingly, respect for the rural hinterland was built into the political-economic institutions of the city-state. Large-scale empires such as that of the Romans, appeared to be able to pluck slaves, soldiers and skilled servants from the rural village economies of the lands they conquered. Indeed, they could also take land directly into *latifundia* cultivation, using forced labour, whilst creating wastelands. The political economy of the Machine Age, for all its apparent sophistication, fails to take into account the need to manage the physical resources of the planet using the ages-old principles of sustainability and returns to the soil.

As Aristotle (384-322BC) recognised so long ago, two forms of political economy can be distinguished. ‘*Oikonomia*’, the word from which the term ‘economics’ is derived, is *household management* designed to increase its use value to all members over the long run. As Daly and Cobb explain:

“If we expand the scope of household to include the larger community of the land, of shared values,

resources, biomes, institutions, language, and history, then we have a good definition of ‘economics for community’.”<sup>2</sup> (Daly and Cobb 1990, p138).

Aristotle used the term ‘*chrematistics*’ to describe a political economy motivated by a desire to enrich oneself at the expense of others, the claiming of rights without responsibilities, the maximisation of short-term personal gain regardless of the needs of others or the natural world. It is concerned with the personal ownership of property, and its manipulation so as to maximize the short-term monetary exchange value to the owner.

As Daly and Cobb explain, the modern economist:

“is convinced that the great discovery of modern economics is that *chrematistics* is the same thing as *oikonomia*, thanks to the invisible hand as described by Adam Smith<sup>3</sup>. The academic discipline of economics is at once the study of the manipulation of property and wealth so as to maximize short-term monetary exchange and the study of how the people as a whole gain from this manipulation. *Chrematistics* thereby intends to assimilate *oikonomia*. There is then no need to cultivate concern for the wider community or any of the virtues associated with that. Rational self-interest suffices.” (Daly and Cobb p139)

Senior economic advisors and academics have gone so far as to suggest that a free market can reduce “the need for compassion, patriotism, brotherly love and social solidarity,” arguing that material self-interest is all that is necessary to secure the common good.

### *Chrematistics* and the Worker Class

The corporate urban world of *chrematistics* relies upon its cultivation of the worker class. The old ‘working class’ has been replaced by a new class of the experts, those who know a lot about some bits of science, technology and the workings of the political economy, but who cannot connect into the whole picture. In his seminal work *The Breakdown of Nations* (1957)<sup>4</sup> professional academic economist Leopold Kohr made the following observation:

“In a large state we are forced to live in tightly specialised compartments, since populous societies

not only make large-scale specialization possible but also necessary. ... Instead of experiencing many different things within surveyable limits, as did our enviable ancestors, we experience only one thing on a colossal plane. But this we experience innumerable times. Mechanics now meet only mechanics, doctors doctors, commercial artists commercial artists, garment workers garment workers, journalists journalists. ... It is considered snobbish, indecent, or treasonable to mix with anyone not of one's kind. If a historian knows a psychoanalyst, he is suspected of being a lunatic. If a business man knows a sculptor he is suspected of being a sex pervert. If an engineer knows a philosopher he is suspected of being a spy. If an economist makes a pronouncement on a question which, by definition, belongs to the field of political science, he is considered a fake. One of my own students accused me in open class of fraud when I ventured to correct a statement made by him concerning a fact of English political life. He rejected my correction by stating sternly that an economist could not possibly have authoritative knowledge in a field outside his own. If he claimed this nevertheless, he was either a genius or an imposter, indicating strongly that he considered me the latter. And he was right, of course. *Even as an economist I am a fraud.* The only field in which I really know something concerns the documentation of international customs unions. There, I know everything, and, meaningless as it is, am probably the world's foremost authority. *In every other field I have to trust what other specialists have dug out.*" (Kohr p121-3)

The above passage indicates the common dilemma of the Machine Age – size and centralisation. Specialists have come to know more and more about less and less, able to cite with authority some details of a narrow field of research, but with no inkling about how the myriad separate parts might fit together in theory, still less in practice.

Perhaps Graham Green has best captured the spirit of the age. His vacuum cleaner salesman in *Our Man in Havana* has no idea what is happening on the world stage. Wormald's teenage daughter has expensive tastes, so when he is approached to be recruited as an agent by the British Secret Service in their Caribbean network during the Cold War, he fabricates a series of agents and events, including drawings of secret weapons which bear a remarkable resemblance to the body and fittings of a vacuum

cleaner. When the deception is eventually detected, and can no longer be denied by the senior officers in the Secret Service, Wormald is awarded a sinecure and an OBE. Green's portrayal of *chrematistics* in the twentieth century is entirely convincing and true to the life of the times.

In the industrial age humanity has forgotten that its roots lie in the soil. Up to this point in time, the industrial world has been supported by the surviving vestiges of the traditional, rural, peasant cultivation. Ancient knowledge of the soils and seasons, of the cultivation of plants, the tending of livestock and forms of human cooperation based upon trust and responsibility, has been developed and handed down through generation after generation. All the varieties of the skills, aptitudes and essential human qualities could, until recent decades, still be found in pockets of farming communities where individuals grew to maturity on the land. It is an illusion to imagine that the 'worker' or 'fraud' class, trained purely to follow instructions on the basis of rational self interest, can create a sane society for their children.

### **Peasant Houses and Households**

Throughout history urban developments – cities and civilizations, with their armies and fortifications – have depended for the means of subsistence upon the enduring knowledge of peasant cultivators. Within the peasant household knowledge of soils, seasons, and all the necessary practical skills for survival have been handed down in unbroken line from generation to generation since time immemorial. No civilisation has ever survived in complete independence from its roots in the soil. Human communities can live in a wide range of environments, eating a vast range of foodstuffs. But we remain dependent upon a bedrock of peasant knowledge of the natural world in specific places and times.

In 1984 a small book was published entitled *Romanian Peasant Houses and Households*. Written by a Romanian academic, Georgeta Stoica, it lays the facts starkly on the kitchen table. For millennium after millennium, the household hearth has been the place where the baby is born. Within the household the child

learns the practical crafts of farming, building, carving, creating fabrics, weaving, cooking, caring, tending plants and animals, of obtaining sources of food, of decoration, story telling and knowledge of the spiritual world. The young couple settle – in the old house or in a new one built to last by the community as a whole, taking full responsibility for the natural, physical, intellectual and spiritual resources under their command. In time the old take their seat by the fireside before joining the ancestors. Studies of peasant households can be found in books and museums all over the world. The records of ‘First Peoples’ have far more than mere curiosity value, nostalgia for a bygone age. They may, very likely, provide the essential lifeline enabling humanity to survive beyond the Machine Age.

### Spiritual Life, Civil Rights and Industrial Economy

The quest for reform of the economic and political systems under which humanity lives at this point in time hangs on the crucial question of the motive force behind the quest. If we, the worker class, are merely worried about losing the perks offered by the industrial machine, the goodies offered to us for serving the industrial machine, we may as well save our breath to blow our porridge for as long as the porridge keeps coming. For any realistic reform to take place, a revolutionary change of heart and mind is essential.

Fortunately, we do not have to reinvent the wheel. Progressive thinkers provide the serious inquirer with food for thought and coherent action. In *The Threefold State*, published in English in 1920, Rudolf Steiner presented the case for thinking in terms of a threefold state or ‘commonwealth’. He observed three aspects of a society:

- (1) **An economic system** having to do with everything necessary for man’s regulation of his relationship with the material external world.
- (2) **A political or equity** system dealing with the social rights and relationships between man and man.
- (3) **A spiritual or educational** system covering all that must come from the individual person, all that proceeds from the human personality and makes its way into the structure of the society.

Arnold Freeman, well-known educationalist and

student of Steiner observed:

“Reconstruct our political and economic machinery as we will, unless it be set going it will not be able to satisfy human needs. There is only one way to make driving force available, and that is by liberating science, religion and art – education in all its forms – from dependence upon industry and politics.”<sup>75</sup>

In 1946 Charles Waterman further amplified Steiner’s thoughts on the threefold commonwealth:

“For the purposes of analytical description we are compelled to speak of the spiritual, political and economic spheres as though they were separate: rather as a lecturer on physiology has to single out the nerve system or the vascular system. But this he does only on the conceptual level; he cannot go to an actual living body, isolate part of it and say, ‘Here is the nervous system’, or ‘Here is the vascular system’. For almost everywhere in the body he will find nerves and veins conjointly present. Similarly, although on the conceptual level we can and must speak severally of the spiritual sphere, the political sphere, and the economic sphere, we never encounter one of them alone. They interpenetrate always, and must do so; for it is the activities and relationships of human beings which constitute the three spheres; and wherever we find human beings living in society, there we find, inseparably interwoven, a spiritual life, a political life, and an economic life.”<sup>76</sup>

As far as I know, Leopold Kohr never came across the teachings of Steiner. Nevertheless, his vision of the self-governing, autonomous city state provides an intriguing alternative to the business-as-usual corporate model, manned at all levels by the worker class. Dreams of a return to an idealised peasant village society of the past are at once impractical and undesirable. A version of the city state, decentralised and on a human scale, would seem an attractive starting point for discussions on viable alternatives.

### The City State

Leopold Kohr was born in 1909 in Oberndorf, a village of 2,000 situated fifteen miles from the Austrian city of Salzburg. The cultural climate of the once-independent city state of Salzburg formed a model which influenced his thinking throughout his life. As he was later to describe it:

“The rural population that built this capital city of barely more than 30,000 for its own enjoyment never numbered more than 120,000. . . . Yet, single-handedly they managed to adorn it with more than 30 magnificent churches, castles, and palaces standing in lily ponds, and an amplitude of fountains, cafes, and inns. And such was their sophisticated taste that they required a dozen theaters, a choir for every church, and an array of composers for every choir, so that it is not surprising that one of the local boys should have been Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. All this was the result of smallness, achieved with not an iota of foreign aid. And what a rich city they made it into.”<sup>7</sup>

The City of Salzburg was very much like the city-state Kohr came to admire and advocate. Today, however, the global chain stores and fast food outlets litter the ancient streets of the old town. Designed, managed, manned and patronized by the worker class of waged and salaried workers, these retail establishments bear witness to the cultural climate – the spiritual values - of the Machine Age.

The population that built the City of Salzburg maintained contact with its rural roots. Until well into the twentieth century the mountains, fields and forests surrounding the city provided food, fuel and the natural materials for building and furnishing homes according to ages old traditions and customs. The natural setting of the city was also a common cultural inheritance, the setting for the folk stories of the mountains, forests, fields and villages surrounding the City of Salzburg.

During the ‘Dark’ or ‘Middle’ Ages city states were built all over Europe. The scale of each political entity was such that the economic management of natural and human resources, the body politic and the cultural sphere could be comprehensively reviewed and participated in by the ordinary citizen. Large scale specialization was neither possible nor desirable. Hence all three spheres related to each other comprehensively.

In one corner of Europe, in the English-speaking British Isles, the new culture of the Machine Age emerged and took shape. The cottage economy of William Cobbett, and the village economy of Tolkein’s Shire, were swept aside to make way for the modern political economy which would

allow the new technologies of the industrial age to be developed. History cannot be set aside or changed. That is the way things happened. However, if change is to come about in the future it is essential to understand what gave rise to the institutional framework under which we now live.

### Two Philosophies of Life

The worker class mentality of fear (of failing to secure a livelihood) and greed (for the goodies of materialism) is cultured by mainstream education. Trained not to question the underlying philosophy of consumerism, workers and consumers rest content to serve the institutions of big business, politics and academia. In recent decades, the alternative culture of the commons, of the common cultural inheritance and the acceptance of the natural world as an entity to be worked with and respected, has been forced to the very fringes of serious debate. It is therefore to texts published in the early twentieth century that we must turn for renewed understanding that there are, indeed, alternatives. In the 1940s Massingham wrote:

“(T)he real, fundamental division of our times . . . is not between political parties nor between conflicting ideologies nor even between nations . . . The real division is between rival philosophies of life. The one believes in exploiting natural resources, the other in conserving them; the one in centralized control, the other in regional self-government; the one in conquering and the other in co-operating with nature; the one in chemical and inorganic methods imitated from those of the urban factory and the other in biological and organic ones derived from the observation of nature as a whole; the one in man as a responsible agent with freewill to choose between the good and the bad, the other in man as a unit of production directed from above by an elite of technologists and bureaucrats; the one in the divine creation of both man and nature, and the other in man as self-sufficient in himself, with nature merely as the means for extracting wealth for himself. The one philosophy is dominant and possesses all the power but the other is in possession of the *truth*” (emphasis original).<sup>8</sup>

Chapters 2-4 cover the institutional history of the world economy from medieval times to the present day. Chapters 4-6 present for discussion a range of alternatives to business as usual.

- <sup>1</sup> Leopold Kohr, *The Breakdown of Nations*, RKP, 1957.
- <sup>2</sup> Herman E Daly and John B Cobb, *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy Towards Community, the Environment and a Sustainable Future*, Green Print 1990.
- <sup>3</sup> See Frances Hutchinson *Understanding the Financial System*, Jon Carpenter 2010, pp60-62.
- <sup>4</sup> Leopold Kohr, *The Breakdown of Nations*, Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1957.
- <sup>5</sup> Foreword to reprint of article by Rudolf Steiner entitled “Spiritual Life, Civil Rights, Industrial Economy”, Rudolf Steiner House, 1922.
- <sup>6</sup> Charles Waterman, *The Three Spheres of Society*, Faber and Faber (1946).
- <sup>7</sup> Cited by Kirkpatrick Sale in his Introduction to the 1978 edition of *The Breakdown of Nations*.
- <sup>8</sup> H.J. Massingham, cited in Patrick Wright *The Village that Died for England: The Strange Story of Tyneham*, Vintage, (1996), p245.

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## **Sustainable agriculture and the European Union: Are they compatible?**

*Sir Julian Rose*

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If the agricultural policy of the European Union ever had any positive attributes – and this is questionable – they have long since been subsumed in a sea of bureaucracy. Worse than this, however, are the decisions emanating from the European Commission which this bureaucracy is supposed to enforce.

Let us remind ourselves that the European Commission is run by unelected technocrats, who have, over the years, granted themselves very substantial powers. Powers that carry with them the right to accept or reject vital policy decisions that affect us all every day of our lives. In the meantime, the European Parliament, which is an elected body, is largely consigned to the sidelines, failing (more often than not) to imprint its conclusions on the statutory agenda overseen by the Commission.

So it is within this disturbingly autocratic context that we struggle to make an impression in our attempts to reform the Common Agricultural Policy and get taxpayers’ money diverted to support those arenas that really need and merit it: the health and diversity of the food we eat, the countryside we love and those caring farmers who are the ultimate trustees of the land and all it produces. Make no mistake, at present your and my money is supporting a regime wholly antithetical to this wish list. With 80 per cent of CAP funds going to just 20 per cent of farms, something looks decidedly wrong. But

when one becomes aware that the 20 per cent of farms getting the cream are mostly large-scale, monocultural factory-farming units and agro-industrial commodity dealers, it becomes abundantly clear that the CAP is little more than an institutionalised banking arm of the corporate agribusiness cartel. A cartel that fields hundreds of ‘lobbyists’ to infiltrate the Brussels networks and ensure that EU Commissioners are wined, dined and made thoroughly replete with all the necessary propaganda to convince them of the merits of Big Pharma and its GMO and seed industry cousins.

Now, anyone with a sense of fairness and justice will immediately recognise that this is a grossly biased way of doing business. What small or even medium-sized business enterprise can afford to pay dozens of lobbyists to promote their cause? The 20 per cent of our money being made available to the millions of smaller farms that struggle to make a living does not begin to address their needs if they are to survive and thrive in the cut throat market places of today’s world.

Amongst such farms are virtually all the ecologically-managed concerns, barring the few ‘landed’ large scale units, and the vast plethora of mixed traditional farming practices whose environmentally friendly methods have been passed down from generation to generation over centuries. These are the farms with whom the

majority of the discerning public have the most sympathy – and for good reason. They produce the only food fit to eat in Europe today.

It is corporate agribusiness, which has made its money turning pristine meadows into monocultural deserts that gets the lion's share of government and EU support. This leads to our hard-won taxpayer contributions being used to trash the food chain and ensure that nitrate-soaked, sterile soils remain the foundation of the modern food chain. It also ensures the survival of the "efficiency and progress" dogma so beloved of politicians, academics and rapacious corporations. Such enterprises, after all, produce just about enough taxable revenue to convince bureaucrats that they are worth subsidising; whereas the majority of humane small and medium sized family farms are operating at close to the poverty line, thereby failing to enrich government coffers. Their owners do at least retain their independence, preferring the time-honoured farming 'way of life' to becoming slaves to global agribusiness.

EU subsidies are paid to farmers on a per hectare basis, so as long as this lasts, the largest farms will always get the greatest financial reward. And so long as decision-makers are locked into mainstream economic dictats that cannot see beyond the 'growth economy' – regardless of the fact that it destroys virtually all it touches - we will be hard pressed to save our planet from certain sickness and ultimate sterility.

Over the past three to four decades Europe has experienced a rapid decline in agricultural land and number of small farms. Between 1960 and 2008, the EU lost 18 per cent of its agricultural land and the same period has seen an intensification of agricultural practices concentrating on a smaller and smaller number of ever bigger farms. At the same time prices and rents have risen, severely restricting the opportunities for new applicants to enter the profession. While those farmers who have been able to maintain their enterprises are financially squeezed by the relentless speculative

fluctuations of the market and rising farm costs that rarely match incoming revenue. Additionally, all across Europe thousands of small communityscale processing plants and abattoirs have been driven out of business by having totally unrealistic and unaffordable EU 'sanitary and hygiene' regulations imposed upon them. This has caused the fragmentation and destruction of the entire infrastructure upon which quality food processors and farmers rely.

Could this mark the nadir of the CAP and the turning point for a radically reformed EU?

Clearly only a major shift in thinking can bring about the deep-rooted reforms that are needed to dig European agriculture out the ever deeper hole it finds itself pushed into.

The EU should start afresh by taking as its main point of emphasis 'Food Security and Food Sovereignty'. Each member state should be encouraged to draw up and implement plans to ensure that as many of its citizens as possible have direct access to adequate amounts of good quality, home-grown, pesticide- and GMO-free foods. As oil prices continue to climb and targets to prevent further fossil fuel emissions are tightened and enshrined in legal acts, the mass transportation of foods across the world is clearly becoming a no-go area. Aside from wars, transportation has been identified as contributing the highest levels of CO2 emissions in our society and considerable environmental degradation.

EU policy-makers should now be aware that rural economies do not thrive on the World Trade Organisation's global import/export model. Under the WTO regime money is sucked out of local communities and lands up in the ever-swelling pockets of vast supermarket chains that profit from a purchasing policy which coerces farmers into supplying mass-produced commodities at knock-down prices. The upshot of this is a catalogue of farm bankruptcies, degraded environments, increasingly sterile de-vitaminised foods and a major public health crisis.

The EU has to part company with the WTO's Codex Alimentarius if it is to effect a realisable Food Security programme in Europe. Under current WTO rulings, the pressures to mass-produce tailor-made "cheap food" for a global marketplace are so great that farmers will extract the last ounce of fertility from the soil in an effort to fulfil their contractual obligations to the super and hypermarket chains that epitomise globalised food retailing. Agrichemical inputs, antibiotics, growth promotors, hydroponics, irradiation and even nanotechnology are now being turned to as ways of maintaining the mass production of foods to fulfil the market's rapacious demands. Thus once prolific rotational, bio-diverse farming practices carried out by generations of families who cared for the land, their farm animals and crops, are replaced by factory farming units that tick none of the boxes increasingly recognised as constituting good practice and 'sustainable' agriculture.

Under a regime redirected towards food security, the emphasis is not on import/export markets of mass-produced commodities, but on stimulating self-sustaining local and regional supply and demand chains and the least environmentally destructive practices; food 'quality' replacing food 'quantity' as the key focus, with new links forged between consumers and producers which greatly shorten the supply chain. This has the benefit of ensuring fresh food is eaten in its optimum condition and as close as possible to its area of production – following a formula which I have called "The Proximity Principle".

The EU should redirect its policies towards enabling and encouraging farmers and local authorities to establish strong circular regional food production and processing enterprises that catalyse the rural economies of the regions and lead to an abundance of distinctive, ecologically raised foods that can be purchased directly off the farm, in local market places and in small to medium sized retail outlets that offer 'local foods for local people'.

Food Security is also dependent upon high

quality, vigorous seeds being widely available to farmers and growers. Therefore local 'living seed banks' should be strongly encouraged in order to fulfil this need. Non-hybrid, traditional, un-engineered seeds have been shown to have greater vigour and more natural resilience than their finely-tuned laboratory bred counterparts, when confronted by climactic fluctuations and airborne disease. The denaturing, patenting and corporate monopoly of seeds via genetic engineering have no place in any serious plan to address and stimulate national and regional food security. GM cross contamination of neighbouring crops via wind blown pollen, bees, insects, birds and people makes it impossible to establish an ecologically stable food chain. What is needed is the local and interregional biological integrity which gives citizens the confidence to purchase foods raised on land free from the toxic residues and the novel genotypes that form the basis of genetic engineering techniques.

It has been repeatedly shown that some 65 per cent of Europeans don't want GM food products on their plates or in their fields. Such resistance has been vindicated by recent independent laboratory research studies carried out in four different European countries which have conclusively shown that rodents fed on a diluted GM feed diet suffered severe lesions of the liver as well as malfunctioning of the kidneys within one year. After two years the rodents became infertile and died. As this provides an indication of what might happen to humans, it is only criminal negligence that has prevented GM crops being banned already.

The CAP exists because we pay for it. Almost no reasonably discerning citizen today actually wants his or her health to be compromised by the way in which our food is grown. We also don't want our countryside to be dominated by vast expanses of chemically forced crops whose nutritional quality is as poor as the sterile soils from which they come. Neither do we want animal concentration camps where thousands of chickens and pigs spend their suffocatingly short lives confined to airless, neon lit sheds and a diet

of antibiotic laced GM soya and maize whose residues have been shown to contaminate our food supply.

An ever growing number of people in the EU member countries want real food from real farms and they want assurances that the methods used on these farms will not compromise their health or the health of the land the produce comes from. EU agricultural commissioner Dracian Ciolo is increasingly reflecting these concerns in his pronouncements on CAP reform. He is doing so at the behest of a coordinated citizens action movement which is pressing for a fundamental rethink of EU agricultural policies, bringing them in line with recommendations made by the 400 specialists and scientists who made up the IAASTD report of 2006. Namely: that traditional mixed family farms and biological farming

methods are best able to ensure national food security, and that genetically modified foods will not be effective in ensuring an end to global hunger.

Consensus on this message is essential if European food and farming is to survive and thrive in the twenty-first century.

Sir JULIAN ROSE is an early pioneer of ecological farming, integrated rural economies and decentralised community regeneration. Farmer, writer, holistic thinker, broadcaster and activist, Julian campaigns against all attempts to sterilise our living earth and expresses belief in the power of the human spirit to welcome new life and hope.

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## The Work of Local Culture

*Wendell Berry*

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For many years my walks have taken me down an old fencerow in a wooded hollow on what was once my grandfather's farm. A battered galvanized bucket is hanging on a fence post near the head of the hollow, and I never go by it without stopping to look inside. For what is going on in that bucket is the most momentous thing I know, the greatest miracle that I have ever heard of: it is making earth. The old bucket has hung there through many autumns, and the leaves have fallen around it and some have fallen into it. Rain and snow have fallen into it, and the fallen leaves have held the moisture and so have rotted. Nuts have fallen into it, or been carried into it by squirrels; mice and squirrels have eaten the meat of the nuts and left the shells; they and other animals have left their droppings; insects have flown into the bucket and died and decayed; birds have scratched in it and left their droppings or perhaps a feather or two. This slow work of growth and death, gravity and decay, which is the chief work of the world, has by now produced in the bottom of the bucket several inches of black humus. I look into that bucket with fascination because I am a farmer of sorts and an artist of sorts, and I recognize there an artistry and a farming far superior to mine, or to that of any human. I have seen the same process at work on

the tops of boulders in a forest, and it has been at work immemorially over most of the land-surface of the world. All creatures die into it, and they live by it.....

However small a landmark the old bucket is, it is not trivial. It is one of the signs by which I know my country and myself. And to me it is irresistibly suggestive in the way it collects leaves and other woodland sheddings as they fall through time. It collects stories too as they fall through time. It is irresistibly metaphorical. It is doing in a passive way what a human community must do actively and thoughtfully. A human community too must collect leaves and stories, and turn them into an account. It must build soil, and build that memory of itself—in lore and story and song—which will be its culture. And these two kinds of accumulation, of local soil and local culture, are intimately related.

In the woods, the bucket is no metaphor; it simply reveals what is always happening in the woods, if the woods is let alone. Of course, in most places in my part of the country, the human community did not leave the woods alone. It felled the trees, and replaced them with pastures and crops. But this did not revoke the law of the woods, which

is that the ground must be protected by a cover of vegetation, and that the growth of the years must return—or be returned—to the ground to rot and build soil. A good local culture, in one of its most important functions, is a collection of the memories, ways, and skills necessary for the observance, within the bounds of domesticity, of this natural law. If the local culture cannot preserve and improve the local soil, then, as both reason and history inform us, the local community will decay and perish, and the work of soil-building will be resumed by nature.

A human community, then, if it is to last long, must exert a sort of centripetal force, holding local soil and local memory in place. Practically speaking, human society has no work more important than this. Once we have acknowledged this principle, we can only be alarmed at the extent to which it has been ignored. For though our present society does generate a centripetal force of great power, this is not a local force, but one centered almost exclusively in our great commercial and industrial cities, which have drawn irresistibly into themselves both the products of the countryside and the people and talents of the country communities.

There is, as one assumes there must be, a countervailing or centrifugal force that also operates in our society, but this returns to the countryside, not the residue of the land's growth to refertilize the fields, not the learning and experience of the greater world ready to go to work locally, and not, or not often, even a just monetary compensation. What are returned, instead, are overpriced manufactured goods, pollution in various forms, and garbage. A landfill on the edge of my own rural county in Kentucky, for example, daily receives about

eighty truckloads of garbage. .... Thus, the end result of the phenomenal modern productivity of the countryside is a debased countryside, which becomes daily less pleasant, and which will inevitably become less productive.

The cities, which have imposed this inversion of forces upon the countryside, have been unable to preserve themselves from it. The typical modern city is surrounded by a circle of affluent suburbs, eating its way outward, like ringworm, leaving the so-called "inner city" desolate, filthy, ugly, and dangerous.

My walks in the hills and hollows around my home have inevitably produced in my mind the awareness that I live in a diminished country. The country has been and is being reduced by the great centralizing process that is our national economy. ....

It would be somewhat more pleasant for country people if they could blame all this on city people. But the old opposition of country versus city—though still true, and truer than ever economically, for the country is more than ever the colony of the city—is far too simple to explain our problem. For country people more and more live like city people, and so connive in their own ruin. More and more country people, like city people, allow their economic and social standards to be set by television and salesmen and outside experts. Our garbage mingles with New Jersey garbage in our local landfill, and it would be hard to tell which is which.

This excerpt is taken from Wendell Berry's *What Are People For?* North Point Press (a division of Farrar Strauss and Giroux) New York 2000

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## **“Islamic terrorism” is the invented excuse for theft of Africa’s riches**

*John Pilger*

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*The invasion has almost nothing to do with “Islamism”, and almost everything to do with the acquisition of resources, notably minerals, and an accelerating rivalry with China.*

A full-scale invasion of Africa is under way.

The United States is deploying troops in 35 African countries, beginning with Libya, Sudan, Algeria and Niger. Reported by Associated Press on Christmas Day, this was missing from most Anglo-American media.

The invasion has almost nothing to do with “Islamism”, and almost everything to do with the acquisition of resources, notably minerals, and an accelerating rivalry with China. Unlike China, the US and its allies are prepared to use a degree of violence demonstrated in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Palestine. As in the cold war, a division of labour requires that western journalism and popular culture provide the cover of a holy war against a “menacing arc” of Islamic extremism, no different from the bogus “red menace” of a worldwide communist conspiracy.

Reminiscent of the Scramble for Africa in the late 19th century, the US African Command (Africom) has built a network of supplicants among collaborative African regimes eager for American bribes and armaments. Last year, Africom staged Operation African Endeavor, with the armed forces of 34 African nations taking part, commanded by the US military. Africom’s “soldier to soldier” doctrine embeds US officers at every level of command from general to warrant officer. Only pith helmets are missing.

It is as if Africa’s proud history of liberation, from Patrice Lumumba to Nelson Mandela, is consigned to oblivion by a new master’s black colonial elite whose “historic mission”, warned Frantz Fanon half a century ago, is the promotion of “a capitalism rampant though camouflaged”.

A striking example is the eastern Congo, a treasure trove of strategic minerals, controlled by an atrocious rebel group known as the M23, which in turn is run by Uganda and Rwanda, the proxies of Washington.

Long planned as a “mission” for Nato, not to mention the ever-zealous French, whose colonial lost causes remain on permanent standby, the war on Africa became urgent in 2011 when the Arab world appeared to be liberating itself from the Mubaraks and other clients of Washington and Europe. The hysteria this caused in imperial capitals cannot be exaggerated. Nato bombers were dispatched not to Tunis or Cairo but Libya, where Muammar Gaddafi ruled over Africa’s largest oil reserves. With the Libyan city of Sirte reduced to rubble, the British SAS directed the “rebel” militias in what has since been exposed as a racist bloodbath.

The indigenous people of the Sahara, the Tuareg,

whose Berber fighters Gaddafi had protected, fled home across Algeria to Mali, where the Tuareg have been claiming a separate state since the 1960s. As the ever watchful Patrick Cockburn points out, it is this local dispute, not al-Qaida, that the West fears most in northwest Africa... “poor though the Tuareg may be, they are often living on top of great reserves of oil, gas, uranium and other valuable minerals”.

Almost certainly the consequence of a French/US attack on Mali on 13 January, a siege at a gas complex in Algeria ended bloodily, inspiring a 9/11 moment in David Cameron. The former Carlton TV PR man raged about a “global threat” requiring “decades” of western violence. He meant implantation of the west’s business plan for Africa, together with the rape of multi-ethnic Syria and the conquest of independent Iran.

Cameron has now ordered British troops to Mali, and sent an RAF drone, while his verbose military chief, General Sir David Richards, has addressed “a very clear message to jihadists worldwide: don’t dangle and tangle with us. We will deal with it robustly” - exactly what jihadists want to hear. The trail of blood of British army terror victims, all Muslims, their “systemic” torture cases currently heading to court, add necessary irony to the general’s words. I once experienced Sir David’s “robust” ways when I asked him if he had read the courageous Afghan feminist Malalai Joya’s description of the barbaric behaviour of westerners and their clients in her country. “You are an apologist for the Taliban” was his reply. (He later apologised).

These bleak comedians are straight out of Evelyn Waugh and allow us to feel the bracing breeze of history and hypocrisy. The “Islamic terrorism” that is their excuse for the enduring theft of Africa’s riches was all but invented by them. There is no longer any excuse to swallow the BBC/CNN line and not know the truth. Read Mark Curtis’s *Secret Affairs: Britain’s Collusion with Radical Islam* (Serpent’s Tail) or John Cooley’s *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism* (Pluto Press) or *The Grand Chessboard* by Zbigniew Brzezinski (HarperCollins) who was midwife to the birth of modern fundamentalist terror. In effect, the mujahedin of al-Qaida and the Taliban were

created by the CIA, its Pakistani equivalent, the Inter-Services Intelligence, and Britain's MI6.

Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter's National Security Adviser, describes a secret presidential directive in 1979 that began what became the current "war on terror". For 17 years, the US deliberately cultivated, bank-rolled, armed and brainwashed jihadi extremists that "steeped a generation in violence". Code-named Operation Cyclone, this was the "great game" to bring down the Soviet Union but brought down the Twin Towers.

Since then, the news that intelligent, educated people both dispense and ingest has become a kind of Disney journalism, fortified, as ever, by Hollywood's licence to lie, and lie. There is the coming *Dreamworks* movie on WikiLeaks, a fabrication inspired by a book of perfidious tittle-tattle by two enriched Guardian journalists; and there is Zero Dark Thirty, which promotes torture and murder, directed by the Oscar-winning Kathryn Bigelow, the Leni Riefenstahl of our time, promoting her master's voice as did the Fuhrer's pet film-maker. Such is the one-way

mirror through which we barely glimpse what power does in our name.

This article was taken from:  
<http://stopwar.org.uk>  
31 January 2013

#### **EDITOR'S NOTE**

For a fully documented article on this subject see "**Mali and AFRICOM's Africa Agenda: Target China**" by F. William Engdahl.

"Out of the blue in the last days Mali has suddenly become the focus of world attention. France has been asked to militarily intervene by Mali's government to drive Jihadist terrorists out of the large parts of the country they claim. What the conflict in Mali really is about is hardly what we read in the mainstream media. It is about vast untapped mineral and energy resources and a de facto re-colonization of French Africa under the banner of human rights. The real background reads like a John Le Carre thriller."

The full article and information about the author are available at <http://www.voltairenet.org/article177327.html#nb1#nb1>

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## **Meditation in Memory of Adolf Eichmann**

*Thomas Merton (1915-1968)*

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*Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962) was head of the "Department for Jewish Affairs" in the Gestapo from 1941 to 1945 and was chief of operations in the deportation of three million Jews to extermination camps. He was tried for his crimes against humanity in 1961.*

*During the court proceedings, Eichmann was declared to be sane.*

*Every military resister, when applying for conscientious objector status, is given psychiatric interviews to detect their state of mind. It is presumed that they are at least suffering from some form of post-traumatic stress disorder, if not completely crazy not to want to pursue the art of killing. And yet, a General can tell us that shooting people can be a "hoot" (see: <http://tomjoad.org/republicanfunnies.htm#generalfun>) and we are reminded of his patriotic service to his country, no examination required. He is "well-adjusted".*

*The following is a meditation from the late Thomas Merton on the meaning of sanity in our modern world.*

One of the most disturbing facts that came out in the Eichmann trial was that a psychiatrist examined him and pronounced him perfectly sane. I do not doubt it all, and that is precisely why I find it disturbing.

If all the Nazis had been psychotics, as some of their leaders probably were, their appalling cruelty would have been in some sense easier to understand. It is much worse to consider this calm, "well-balanced," unperturbed official conscientiously going about his desk work, his administrative job which happened to be the supervision of mass murder. He was thoughtful, orderly, unimaginative. He had a profound respect for system, for law and order. He was obedient, loyal, a faithful officer of a great state.

He served his government very well.

He was not bothered much by guilt. I have not heard that he developed any psychosomatic illnesses. Apparently he slept well. He had a good appetite, or so it seems. True, when he visited Auschwitz, the Camp Commandant, Hoess, in a spirit of sly deviltry, tried to tease the big boss and scare him with some of the sights, Eichmann was disturbed, yes. He was disturbed. Even Himmler had been disturbed, and had gone weak at the knees. Perhaps, in the same way, the general manager of a big steel mill might be disturbed if an accident took place while he happened to be somewhere in the plant. But of course what happened at Auschwitz was not an accident: just the routine unpleasantness of the daily task. One must shoulder the burden of daily monotonous work for the Fatherland. Yes, one must suffer discomfort and even nausea from unpleasant sights and sounds. It all comes under the heading of duty, self-sacrifice, and obedience. Eichmann was devoted to duty, and proud of his job.

The sanity of Eichmann is disturbing. We equate sanity with a sense of justice, with humaneness, with prudence, with the capacity to love and understand other people. We rely on the sane people of the world to preserve it from barbarism, madness, destruction. And now it begins to dawn on us that it is precisely the sane ones who are the most dangerous.

It is the sane ones, the well-adapted ones, who can without qualms and without nausea aim the missile, and press the buttons that will initiate the great festival of destruction that they, the sane ones, have prepared. What makes us so sure, after all, that the danger comes from a psychotic getting into a position to fire the first shot in a nuclear war? Psychotics will be suspect. The sane ones will keep them far from the button. No one suspects the sane, and the sane ones will have perfectly good reasons, logical, well-adjusted reasons, for firing the shot. They will be obeying sane orders that have come sanely down the chain of command. And because of their

sanity they will have no qualms at all. When the missiles take off, then, it will be no mistake. We can no longer assume that because a man is "sane" he is therefore in his "right mind." The whole concept of sanity in a society where spiritual values have lost their meaning is itself meaningless. A man can be "sane" in the limited sense that he is not impeded by disordered emotions from acting in a cool, orderly tier, according to the needs and dictates of the social situation in which he finds himself. He can be perfectly "adjusted." God knows, perhaps such people can be perfectly adjusted even in hell itself.

And so I ask myself: what is the meaning of a concept of sanity that excludes love, considers it irrelevant, and destroys our capacity to love other human beings, to respond to their needs and their sufferings, to recognize them also as persons, to apprehend their pain as one's own? Evidently this is not necessary for "sanity" at all. It is a religious notion, a spiritual notion, a Christian notion. What business have we to equate "sanity" with "Christianity"? None at all, obviously. The worst error is to imagine that a Christian must try to be "sane" like everybody else, that we belong in our kind of society. That we must be "realistic" about it. We must develop a sane Christianity: and there have been plenty of sane Christians in the past. Torture is nothing new, is it? We ought to be able to rationalize a little brainwashing, and genocide, and find a place for nuclear war, or at least for napalm bombs, in our moral theology. Certainly some of us are doing our best along those lines already. There are hopes! Even Christians can shake off their sentimental prejudices about charity, and become sane like Eichmann. They can even cling to a certain set of Christian formulas, and fit them into a Totalist Ideology. Let them talk about justice, charity, love, and the rest. These words have not stopped some sane men from acting very sanely and cleverly in the past.... No, Eichmann was sane. The generals and fighters on both sides, in World War II, the ones who carried out the total destruction of entire cities, these were the sane ones. Those

who have invented and developed atomic bombs, thermonuclear bombs, missiles; who have planned the strategy of the next war; who have evaluated the various possibilities of using bacterial and chemical agents: these are not the crazy people, they are the sane people. The ones who coolly estimate how many millions of victims can be considered expendable in a nuclear war, I presume they do all right with the Rorschach ink blots too. On the other hand, you will probably find that the pacifists and the ban-the-bomb people are, quite seriously, just as we read in *Time*, a little crazy. I am beginning to realize that “sanity” is no longer a value or an end in itself. The “sanity” of modern man is about as useful to him as the huge bulk and

muscles of the dinosaur. If he were a little less sane, a little more doubtful, a little more aware of his absurdities and contradictions, perhaps there might be a possibility of his survival. But if he is sane, too sane ... perhaps we must say that in a society like ours the worst insanity is to be totally without anxiety, totally “sane.”

from *Raids on the Unspeakable* by Thomas Merton  
copyrighted in 1966. Published by Burns and Oates.

<http://www.tomjoard.org/eichmann.htm>

***Understanding the Financial System***

Frances Hutchinson.

Published in 2010, this fully documented book traces the history of finance in the twentieth century.

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## Wealth-Producing Maniacs

*Peter Maurin*

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When John Calvin legalized money-lending at interest  
he made the bank account the standard of values.

When the bank account became the standard of values  
people ceased to produce for use and began to produce for profits.

When people began to produce for profits  
they became wealth-producing maniacs.

When people became wealth-producing maniacs  
they produced too much wealth.

When people found out that they had produced too much wealth  
they went on an orgy of wealth-destruction  
and destroyed ten million lives besides.

Taken from *Easy Essays*  
[www.easyessays.org](http://www.easyessays.org)

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## Book Reviews

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**Therapeutic Story-telling:  
101 Healing Stories for Children**  
**Susan Perrow**

Hawthorn Press 2012  
978-1-907359-15-6  
£20.00 Pb 255pp

“Therapeutic Storytelling” offers a supportive and constructive guide to help parents and caregivers combat the many pressures inflicted on children in today’s society. It espouses the value of the imagination and the power of storytelling to heal a wide range of problems and imbalances experienced by today’s young

people. Susan Perrow, the book's author, reminds us of what is lost when children access a lot of their entertainment via computers and the television. In a commercially driven society where such prevalence is placed on progress and technological advancements, the book provides a refreshing reminder of what can be gained by simply and directly communicating with our children.

The book is very much a practical resource for writing, specifically a guide and helping hand in crafting tales that will have some tangible benefit for the listener. It is not a guide to becoming an author, nor to writing books. Susan Perrow runs workshops in the area of therapeutic storytelling and this book both references those workshops and the experiences and success stories of the attendees, and provides a supportive reinforcement to them.

The first section of the book gives practical tips for creating stories. Perrow discusses the transformative and restorative powers of metaphor – how metaphor can illuminate a situation in uniquely effective ways. She provides a construction model for story writing with hints on how to create a framework, how to progress a story and how to engage a child's interest. She suggests creating tables, lists, mind maps and ways to build tension as well as offering narrative alternatives. Despite her extensive experience, however, Perrow never adopts a lecturing tone. It appears evident throughout the book that her passion for her subject goes hand in hand with her continual desire to learn from others' experiences and hear about how stories can change people's lives.

Perrow is also aware of the potential pitfalls of writing stories to vulnerable children and stresses that a therapeutic story must be a story with a positive resolution – a story which is resolved by the “restoration of harmony or balance in a situation or behaviour that has been disruptive or out of balance”. Therefore, one must affirm rather than induce guilt, and one must never use fear or the threat of fear to get a point across.

The majority of the book is devoted to the inclusion of stories which demonstrate her techniques and embody her storytelling tips.

Not all of these stories are written by her but have been contributed by people who have attended her workshops and adopted her methods successfully. Perrow stresses the importance of connecting with nature as a way of restoring balance. As she spends much of her time in Africa and her native Australia, some of the stories feature a backdrop or animals that may have less relevance to a European child but, in these instances, she reminds us that the story bones can be adapted very easily for different cultures.

The stories are grouped into different topics that cover a huge number of problems and situations ranging from the everyday situation of a child who doesn't listen and won't stop talking, to the literally earth shattering situation of children who are anxious following an earthquake. The stories consequently vary enormously but are comparable in the imaginative way they address each problematic situation or behaviour and encourage independence and positivity. In “The Rhythm Sticks”, for example, a child who is continually noisy and disruptive is shown how to channel noise and create music. In “The Winged Horse”, the allegory of a quest is used to illustrate to children how to strive and work towards their goals. The resolution in this story is the gaining of confidence and motivation.

“Therapeutic Storytelling” is peppered with examples of people who, with the help of stories, have overcome difficult situations. Anyone dealing with children, or looking for encouragement or help in writing stories, will no doubt find this accessible book a practical, helpful and interesting resource.

Rachel Hyland lives in Bristol and works as an Online Marketing Manager. She has two daughters: Hannah, aged six, who is in year two of the local primary school, and Grace, aged four, who attends preschool.

Did you know?

All issues of *The Social Crediter*  
from Autumn 2001 to Spring 2013  
are available on our website:  
[www.douglassocialcredit.com](http://www.douglassocialcredit.com)

**Hot Beds: How to grow early crops using an age-old technique**

**Jack First**

ISBN 978-0-85784-106-3

Green Books, £9.95

Pbk. 128 pages.

A load of manure takes pride of place amongst the illustrations in this illuminating text on the history, theory and practice of building hot beds. The Victorians, and the Romans before them, harnessed the natural processes of the decay of waste materials such as dung, night soil, urine, leaves and straw to create the heat necessary to cultivate out of season crops of vegetables in cold climates. The author has mastered this art. In precise language, using clear illustrations, he demonstrates how local waste resources can be recycled sustainably, saving both real and financial resources. The book explains in concise detail the advantages of hot beds, how they work, and why. Opposite the picture of the dung heap - more accurately described as a pile of stable litter - is an explanation of the mix necessary to create a hot bed: "droppings + urine + bedding + moisture + microorganisms = decay and heat". Throughout the text and in the case studies at the end, the author documents experimental observation of stack temperatures, soil fertility, comparison of site features (elevation, soil quality and so on). Three chapters cover the planning of the bed space, the types and varieties of plants which grow well, and advice on how to manage the beds over the months of the year. *Hot Beds* is neatly laid out. Combined with a clarity of writing style, the index and cross referencing make the book a joy to work with. Furthermore, the author demonstrates the potential for adaptation of the hot bed principle to other uses, e.g., energy saving by using the generation of heat on the hot bed

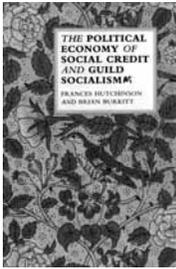
principle for cooking food and heating water. An experienced gardener, dedicated to working for the common good in cooperation with others of like mind, the author has taught the principles of soil management and plant growth to school children and to adult groups of varying needs and abilities. The short growing season in the North of England makes it difficult to obtain supplies of fresh, uncontaminated salad and vegetable crops. Rather than rely exclusively on imported food from all over the world, many vegetable gardeners have built and maintained greenhouses with all the associated financial and ecological expense of fossil fuels. Instead of throwing money at the problem, the author of this little gem of a book has drawn upon local knowledge, local resources and a lifetime of expertise to demonstrate how to create a highly productive, low-cost eco-friendly gardening system. As Jack First researched this book and prepared it for publication he was probably unaware that he was writing the definitive textbook on the hands-on application of Social Credit principles. In the twenty-first century it becomes more essential than ever to free the real economy of land, resources, knowledge and talents from the dead hand of the financial economy.

The principles of returns to the soil, re-use and re-cycling are demonstrated throughout the text. By combining manure, straw, leaves, urine, waste wool, scaffolding planks and other locally available junk items on the lines indicated, the reader can become a far more proficient economist than is possible by gaining a university degree in economics. *Hot Beds* is set to be a signpost towards the future of a sane and sustainable economy.

Frances Hutchinson

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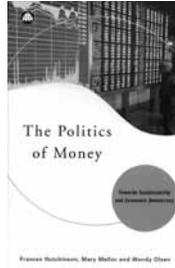
# Recommended Reading



**Frances Hutchinson & Brian Burkitt**

*The Political Economy of Social Credit and Guild Socialism*

(Jon Carpenter £12.99)



**Frances Hutchinson, Mary Mellor & Wendy Olsen**

*The Politics of Money: Towards Sustainability & Economic Democracy*

(Pluto £16.99)



**Frances Hutchinson**

*What Everybody really wants to know about Money*

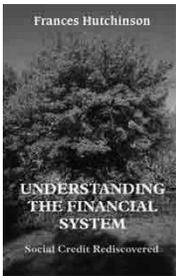
(Jon Carpenter £12.00)



**Eimar O'Duffy**

*Asses in Clover*

(Jon Carpenter £11.00)



**Frances Hutchinson**

*Understanding the Financial System: Social Credit Rediscovered*

(Jon Carpenter £15.00)

**Frances Hutchinson**

*Social Credit? Some Questions Answered.*  
KRP £2.00

## Books by C H Douglas

(available in the Social Credit Library)

*Economic Democracy*

*Social Credit*

*The Monopoly of Credit*

*Warning Democracy*

*Credit Power and Democracy*

*The Control and Distribution of Production*

*For reviews of all these publications and details of how to purchase them, please see our website: [www.doulassocialcredit.com](http://www.doulassocialcredit.com)*

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