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Homesteading in Australia

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Flight From The City

By Ralph Borsodi (first published 1932)

Our revolt against commercial milk products was helped by one of those fortuitous incidents which shape all of our lives, though we are seldom conscious of their importance at the time. Mrs. Borsodi, before she gave up business, had occasion to visit one of the largest creameries in the country to secure information for an advertising campaign. Her disillusionment about the dairy industry and creamery butter was complete. Modern science, she found, was being used to produce a tasty and attractive-looking butter from raw materials which often came into the creamery only fit for slopping the hogs. Of superficial cleanliness there was plenty, but underneath the scrupulous surface was the fact that the system was so perfect that no matter what sort of cream was used, a product which had the appearance of quality was produced. No doubt in a perfectly organized industrial state, in which the profit motive has in some way been legislated out of existence, the technicians who will operate the creameries will eliminate some of the worst of present-day mass-production evils. We however were not only somewhat cynical about the benefits of unlimited government supervision, but saw no good reason why we should postpone the eating of pure and fresh foods until the distant day when a social revolution would wipe out all the blots on present-day industrial production. Besides, contacts with state institutions—hospitals, for instance—prevented us from sharing the sanguine hopes of socialist friends about the quality of foodstuffs which would be produced in a socialist heaven.

As soon as we were well settled in the country we bought a cow—too good a cow, I am afraid. When fresh she gave us as much as twenty quarts of milk a day. Most of the time we had so much milk that it seemed as if we could bathe in it. But what milk it was! In spite of the fact that we drank all we desired, made our own butter and pot cheese, there was still a surplus of milk to be disposed of. A few neighbors begged us to sell them milk, but this experience, just like our experience in selling eggs and chickens, only confirmed our determination not to produce for the market. We were producing a quality of milk far superior to that in the market; what we received for it hardly paid for the labor of cleaning bottles and delivering it. We wondered what we could buy with the money half so precious as the milk. We needed two or three quarts of milk daily. Twenty was too much of a good thing. We had no intention of living on milk alone, nor of going into the dairy business. For a family of four, the cow was evidently not the best solution of the milk problem. With a family of six or more persons, it would perhaps have been different. But for us, using a cow to produce milk was like using a sledge hammer to drive carpet tacks. We sold the cow and decided to try Swiss milch goats.

The milch goat is still somewhat of a novelty, handicapped by the fact that the goat is supposed to be funny. In our judgment it is an ideal solution of the problem of producing milk for use within the family. Its milk is richer than cow's milk in butterfat, and easier to digest. When the goats are properly fed, it is hard to distinguish its taste from cow's milk. We have repeatedly fooled friends of ours who were prejudiced against it. We bought one pure-blooded Toggenburg doe, and one grade doe. The grade doe was probably a half-blood; there is no reason why one should go to the expense of buying pure bloods unless one intends to go into goat-breeding. Properly selected grade goats will give practically as much milk and are much less expensive. Two does, however, should be purchased. Goats are evidently very gregarious; they fret and hold back their milk if they are without companionship. The buck is a smelly and obnoxious animal, and the does should be taken to a buck when ready for breeding. Unlike a cow, which is a perfect nuisance when in heat, bellowing and carrying on in a most disgraceful manner, the does are so small that they can be put into any automobile and quickly taken to a buck for breeding. By breeding one doe so that it kids in the spring and the other in the fall, two does will furnish a supply of milk the year round. When fresh, our does gave us about three quarts of milk daily.

Among the great advantages of the goats was the great reduction in the labor of milking and caring for them. To milk a quart or two morning and evening proved a trifling job in comparison with having to fill a ten-quart pail twice a day. And the goats, unlike the cow, kept themselves clean. As a matter of fact, they are rather fastidious in their habits. They will not eat grain or hay which has been trampled under foot, though they will eat almost any kind of vegetation and are fond of eating bark off of trees. This partiality for bark probably explains their fondness for paper, most of which is made of wood pulp. They will probably eat the paper off of a tin can, but the notion that they will eat the tin itself to me is a silly superstition.

One disadvantage of goats has to do with butter. The fat globule in goat's milk does not separate or rise as readily as that in cow's milk. If the butter is to be made, a cream separator has to be used. With this piece of apparatus to overcome this disadvantage, it seems to me that for the small family all the advantages lie on the side of the goat. We found butter-making, using an efficient rotary churn, a most profitable activity. There is simply no comparison between fresh, homemade butter and creamery butter. With a good refrigerator to get the cream to the proper temperature, the butter forms very quickly. Most of the operations in butter-making can be done mechanically with an efficient kitchen mixer.

When we purchased "Sevenacres" we found ourselves in possession of a small "farm" little of which was really suitable for farming. There was plenty of room for garden, though no vegetables and berries had been raised on the place for many years; there was an old orchard containing some apple, plum, and cherry trees; there was a hay-field, and a piece of woodland suitable for a wood-lot. Actual farming operations for us, when we began to develop our theory of self-sufficiency, seemed to fall into two divisions—one having to do with the growing of vegetables, berries, fruit, and foodstuffs for our own consumption, and the other with the growing of feed for the chickens, the goats, and other livestock. We have had considerable success with the first: with the second we have tried to do relatively little as yet.

Letters, cont'd

pressed my self-esteem to be ex-
isting on a federal (Public Health
Service) grant, and to think of

keep my research going, and also
having even less time to study
economics, history, etc. So I de-
cided that my higher values con-
sisted of doing that. I'd like to
push your journals out here.—
Tom McGivern, 2521 Durant.

Letters From Abroad

Hygienic Ashram in India

To the Editor:

It is a great pleasure to know of the School of Living activities which I believe are symbols of brotherhood. **The Green Revolution** is a bridge between the Hygienists, homesteaders and decentralists of east and west. I feel sure that your School of Living will one day become one of the most valued institutes in the world. Our country is proud of the Ashram near Poona City founded by my late father under the guidance of the younger brother of Vinoba Bhave. It is one of the best, and worth seeing on any pilgrimage to India. My grandfather (85), H. I. Joshi, was one of the close associates of Mahatma Gandhiji in South Africa during the Boer War and brought his family up in a hygienic atmosphere. Our Ashram is in financial difficulties, and would greatly appreciate complimentary copies of yours and Borsodi's books.—Dr. I. P. Joshi, Limbdi, Saurashtra, India

New Zealand Compost Society

A letter about **Go Ahead and Live!** in the **Organic Gardening** magazine interests me immensely. As president of the Wellington branch of New Zealand Organic Compost Society, I spend much time teaching people the wisdom of the organic way. Our society is 25 years old, and has dealt mainly with our country's gardeners, but we now realize that the organic movement must expand to the larger producing areas. So I suggest a hands-across-the-sea mutual aid society—members of our society and yours exchanging journals, ideas and experiences. Ask your readers to write down their successes and failures and send them to us.

We publish **Soil and Health**, and we have an **Organically Grown Foodstuffs Co.**, operating 55 shops in the larger cities (all foodstuffs labeled "Organically Grown and Free from Poisonous Sprays"). A vast organization in Switzerland operates along the same lines. We would appreciate any books, journals or pamphlets by Rodale and other organic leaders for our lending library (serving 400 members). It is hard for us to get them because of the exchange problem (we can buy only one book per year from America). Such a wealth of knowledge and so many people not having access to it. Is not the money system the curse of mankind?—Mrs. Amy E. Taylor, 40 Rhine St., Wellington S 2, New Zealand

Homesteading in Australia

To the Editor:

John Seymour of England wrote to us about the homesteaders movement in America. May we have a copy of your journal? There is a growing body of people here who are striving to make a simple worth-while life for themselves in the country, by moving out from big cities. They find a small plot of land, and earn what money they need by some skill they can market without being tied to an office or bench all the weeks.—Miss I. Carter, 15 Madel Ave., Strathmore, Victoria, Australia.

Folk School and Peoples' Money in Denmark

To the Editor:

Hesbjerg Folk High School is housed in an old palace set in 1100 acres of beautiful countryside in the heart of Fyn, Denmark's middle island. Gardens, fields, and parkland are ample for farming. We hold a summer school, with participants from many nations. We work in the morning, with lectures and discussions in the afternoon. Those who come have little money, but no one is refused a stay. Payment is made in work, and shortage of cash for external use is made up by Hesbjerg vouchers, with which we pay for goods outside, and which are redeemed in goods from the Hesbjerg shop.

ply, the remedy lies in the people's own hands. Throughout history commodity currencies have helped to keep goods circulating. Paper vouchers can be introduced. Instead of barter, trading chickens, cigarettes, etc., use vouchers. These bits of paper are no more than trading stamps, gift tokens, luncheon vouchers or theatre or railway tickets. They help exchange useful things for work or other goods instead of using cash.

Such exchange systems, where properly managed, foster local community spirit. They create employment, eliminate "leisure problems" and decentralize money power.—Ulf Christensen, Aile 26, Oslo, Norway

Decentralization In Czechoslovakia

To the Editor:

I have read your **Green Revolution** with delight; it expresses many of my own ideas. You in America feel much more the impact of technology on man's health. Too many people see only the positive side of technology; only slowly do the negative effects penetrate our consciousness. Before the war a trend back to nature started here. Many, especially the younger generation, bought small lots and built weekend huts. Today most people want a flat in town, a car and a summer house on a river or in the mountains. Those who do not achieve this aim spend their holidays in retreat houses belonging to factories or trade unions. Up to now, with government encouragement, the flow has been of people from country to towns. Owing to collectivization and socialization of farms, people lost interest in growing their own vegetables. But slowly the number of "on-to-the-landers" and "do-it-yourselfers" is increasing. We would be delighted to be in touch with your School of Living, to share our common experiences. So many of us want to live as natural beings, and do not want to be a cog in the big machinery of the mechanized world.—Dusan J. Kafka, Unitaria, Stare Mesto, Prague, Czechoslovakia.

Losing Dignity And Freedom

A reader submits: "The philosophy of materialism created the 'need' for more goods that encourage mechanization that builds big business and big labor that produce dependent people, who vote for a welfare state that takes over goods, machines, businesses and people."

Your editor submits that "philosophy of materialism" is too general a term, too large an abstraction. Is it not important to stress a few practical and specific steps in the process prior to the "need for more goods?" How about this:

"To live, one must eat; to eat one must work—i.e. adapt and use the products of the earth. Work is tiring, and leads to trying to get "things" without working. This leads the strong to take and enclose the land of the weaker. This forces the dispossessed (the have-nots) to borrow from the "haves." To get cash to pay the land-cost and rents and to pay the mortgage and interest rates, the producers economize by cutting down labor with machines. The "haves" build the machines and the big businesses that produce the dependent people, who vote for a welfare state that takes over goods, machines, businesses and people."

Should we not keep our eyes on the fundamental errors—enclosure of the land, and charging for use of money? Are not those who want a better life obligated to keep their minds on the long-range solutions to these basic possessional problems?—M. J. D.

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THE GREEN REVOLUTION — 3 July, 1967

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THE OWNER-BUILT HOME is now completed. Volumes I, II, III, IV are available (\$2 for each volume) from: Ken Kern, Sierra Route, Oakhurst, Calif. (7-67)

IS THERE a carpenter-mechanic who sees the beauty, simplicity and usefulness of windmills? Who would love to make one or two to work a small grindstone, to churn a tub of laundry, or as a more complicated technology, to turn a generator for heat? Who would see the significance of a windmill as an aspect of technology, that is in proper relation to nature, people, real democracy, decentralization and oriented to village life and industry in the Gandhian sense? Who would see their beneficence as a conservator of the trees and forests, and oil and coal of the earth? Martha Shaw, Ashley Falls, Mass. (6-67)

IS THERE a player of Oriental music who knows the power of his music and understands the significance of village life in the Gandhian sense that would make himself or herself available to a small New England village? Martha Shaw, Ashley Falls, Mass. (6-67)

KIND WIDOW, retired nurse, wishes to meet a man about 70 who is equally concerned and interested in world events, nature, the arts and similarly eager to share an interesting, wholesome and devoted home life in north California. —Freda Jay, 621 Avalon, Santa Rosa, Calif. 95401 (6-67)

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"People, asked from where it came, would very seldom know. They would simply eat and ask, 'Was not it always so?'"

Read **The Incredible Bread Machine**, a study of capitalism, freedom, and the state, by Richard W. Grant, \$4 from Sandra Jeffries, Box 14031, E. Portland Station, Portland, Ore. 97214 (6-67)

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