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G. Rossiter

Steady State Economy: Real Hope for the Future

by Bob Fiut

Without a doubt the most fundamental issue our generation must contend with is the question of economic growth. This issue underlies every major policy decision now confronting the world, and the response our generation gives to this question will determine modern society's course. We now stand precariously at a proverbial and monumental "Y in the road."

TWO PATHS

Journeying along one path, we have struggled to enlighten ourselves to the idea that "enough is best" and have begun seriously developing a sustainable way of life based primarily on solar power, with resource use kept to a minimum. Venturing the other path, we have continued our drive for more "progress." If history is any indication, this will mean more production, more construction, more munitions, more people that can't be fed, and more and more consumption--until we literally start consuming each other. The scope of this "progress" will be extended if we unwittingly acquiesce to a nuclear-powered growth economy. Because uranium 235, the fuel that present nuclear technology depends on, is almost as scarce as oil and gas, we will, inevitably be required to rely on breeder reactors and the production of plutonium to fuel them. This hapless path seems to be the one modern society will embark on unless the people, government, and businesses of the United States begin adopting farsighted policies aimed at creating a future steady-state economy --very soon.

STEADY-STATE ECONOMY

Essentially, in a steady-state system both population and material goods are held at a constant level and "throughput"--the basic flow of matter-energy from the environment, through the human economy, and then back to the environment--is limited to the minimum necessary to maintain that level. "Such an economic system can still 'develop'--culture, knowledge, quality, and goodness can all continue to evolve --but it doesn't 'grow'." This system recognizes our real biophysical limits and requires us to adjust ourselves and our economy to function within those boundaries.

Let us turn now to a discussion of three known biophysical limits to unrestricted growth. First and foremost is the depletion of nonrenewable resources. These include oil and gas, the most unrealistically cheap, convenient, transportable, and storable energy sources available to man. These two fossil fuels, however, will become very scarce within the average lifetime of a college student today. According to a recent analysis by the Rand corporation "we can continue producing domestic supplies of oil and gas at 1979 rates for 20 to 40 (more) years..." U.S. oil production peaked in 1970. World oil production will reach its peak about 1989, according to the head of long-term planning for Gulf Oil. M. King Hubbert, a well-known geologist, has calculated that even if the earth was a hollow sphere filled with petroleum, it would last only 342 years at present consumption rates.

Again, it is our generation that will decide. Frank Zarb, former Energy Administrator for the

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Beansprouts & Activism

By Stan Holmes

The meeting of the Granola Natural Peace Society is about to begin. Bearded men wearing green army fatigues and ponchos, and hairy-legged women, bra-less and clad in brightly colored long dresses, mingle around, talk, while they wait for the meeting to start. The leader, Frank Aurelius, a stoic type, expounds on the virtues of respect: "Will everyone please shut up!" he shouts. "And may the eleventh annual Granola Natural Peace Society meeting come to order."

"It's time to mellow out," agrees Larry Cellophane. "We've got to relate to all the cats around how the repressive imperialist fascist system is raping third world countries." Some order is restored after Larry's quick discourse, and many heads nod in agreement. Then Bobby Buddha blurts out that everyone must meditate and chant for natural and wholesome Karmas. He says the vegetable of the week is "cucumber," and everyone must chant for its healthy and natural growth. A wisecracker in back quickly shouts out, "Yeah, and Reagan's head is full of cucumbers." Everyone bursts out laughing.

"Enough," cries Aurelius, showing the pomposity and dignity of a true Roman. "Will the Republic...oops, I mean will all Granolas please come to a cosmic order." The group settles down, and Aurelius, satisfied with his power, quietly sits down to allow Ella Orcan to explain the agenda. Ella frantically gets up and rushes to the podium. Wiping the sweat off her forehead, she sighs, looks nervously out towards the eccentric group, then looks down at her paper and begins to ramble through the agenda faster than you can say "a cucumber, lettuce, tomato, and beansprout sandwich on honey-oat wheat bread."

"Slow down!" Aurelius consoles her, "and pretend you're like a whale," he said. "Slow and rhythmic." Ella settles down much like a humpback cow and begins to explain the agenda: "Okay everyone out there in utopiasville, here's the agenda." Snickering is heard in the group. Ella continues, "the first topic is what effects will the test tube baby or your common clone, have on the natural order of the universe?" Radical Rick jumps up in his flourescent red suit, waving his bright red flag. His nostrils are flared and with firey eyes he yells, "But what about the whole irrepressible capitalist oligarchy that controls the masses!"

"We must revolt now! Long live Lenin and Mao!" Rick shouts out and working to a frenzy he screams, "the people must stand up for their rights and revolt for a...a proletariot dictatorship... oops, I mean a collective bargaining system, no a humanitarian..."

"Oh shove a cucumber in your mouth, Rick," came an angry reply. "Yeah, cut the commie crap and go eat some granola or something," came another. Suddenly, a shining synthesis of humanity's collective efforts emerges and quiets the mounting rumble. It was the sweet and beautiful Sylvia Swan. She floated up from her lotus position on the ground and while she spoke, cosmic rays beamed towards everyone on the floor. "Ooh," came one reply. "Aah," was another. The soothing satisfaction of serene contentment marked the ecstatic faces of everyone there. And Sylvia's sweet supernal voice asked, "what are clones and test-tube babies?"

Max in the back answered, while sucking hard on a joint, "they're people like James Watt who eat bibles as a fuel source." A large laughing trip ensued and again everyone began breaking into splinter groups. Aurelius promptly quieted them down and told Sylvia her question would be addressed when the agenda was completed and everyone broke into smaller rap therapy groups. Ella then continued:

"Okay, wow, I almost spaced again," she said dreamily, "however, the second thing on the agenda is a demonstration opposing the construction of another nuclear plant."

"It is the 25th in this state," she said despondently. A radioactive sting shocks the group. Whispers, mumbles and accusations circulate around the room. It looks like another rumble might begin.

"Thirdly," Ella shouts to quiet everyone down, "the nuclear demonstration will coincide with a coal demonstration showing our disapproval of coal as a viable energy source."

"Furthermore," Ella yelled, seeming wildly distressed, "fifteen coal plants now burn in our state," she cried. "As you all know, we can't tell the smog from the fog anymore." The group is now acutely upset, people are angry and yell obscenities at fellow society members. Women cry, and bodies fling around the room.

"And fourthly," Ella shouts above the maddening crowd to quiet them down, "we need feedback on what the group should do about the large arms build-up the government zealously proposes!" The crowd is almost in an uncontrolled frenzy and one heckler who was mixing perrier water with whiskey drunkenly said, "we should drop Haig over Russia with a ton of wheat!"

The group was about to burst at the seams. They swayed back and forth like cattle in a corral. Up front Aurelius tried to simmer everyone down, "mellow out man, remember the stoics, peace," he cried. It was to no avail. Some of the radicals threw lettuce and carrots at Aurelius, and Rick called for a people's revolt. It seemed the group was tired of changing the world, nobody seemed to listen, nobody seemed to care. It looked like the meeting could explode any minute. Fights broke out and wild contorted dancing erupted.

Finally, after many in the group mellowed out, it was decided the group should live a discreet, yet different lifestyle which didn't confront the government. Hell, the government always won anyway, they thought. Why fight them, when you can sneak by them, they reasoned. So it was settled. The people yelled in ecstasy! Finally they were free.

Sylvia Swan floated merrily through the room and the others began to follow. Frank Aurelius, Radical Rick, Bobby Buddha, Ella Orcan, and Larry Cellophane, with the rest, grabbed each other and celebrated their new found freedom. "We are free," they shouted, "We are free." Carrot juice and granola was brought out, and the music of the Grateful Dead turned on. The party began and everyone was happy. Someone shouted from the corner, "What a revelation, man!"

Editor's Farewell

by Mark Gardner

With this issue, the second year of the Monthly Planet's existence draws to a close. Those of us on this year's staff have enjoyed producing the magazine this year, and hope that its presence on campus has stimulated thought, and stirred some emotion as well. It has been our goal to enlighten, confuse, anger, inspire, depress, and provoke you to action--but hopefully not to bore you!

I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to the following people who have, in one way or another, made the Planet what it was this quarter: Brenda Horn, Sadao (Big Mac) Miyamoto, Chris Burke, Rick (Electric) Adams, Valerie Smith, Stan (Fire and Brimstone) Holmes, the folks at the A.S. printshop, Shawn (Nimblefingers) Overstreet, Jim Springer, Rick (The Knife) Conner, Bob Keller, Jim (Toastmaster) Lane, Mark Vance,

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Organic Farming: Approved by the USDA

by Jim Springer

Extensive use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers in U.S. agriculture has resulted in a number of problems. These include reproductive failures of birds, the destruction of mollusks, crabs, and shrimp, the elimination of natural insect predators in some areas, declining bee populations, and accumulation of significant amounts of pesticide residues in human bodies. Organic chlorine residues have been found in animal tissues ranging from the Arctic to the Antarctic. Clearly, a more benign form of agriculture is desirable. But can we grow the crops we need without intensive use of pesticides and other harmful chemicals? Organic farmers would certainly say yes, and a recent USDA report would lend support to that answer. The report, completed last July, shows that organic farms in the U.S. are usually productive, efficient, and well-managed.

A USDA sponsored team of researchers interviewed 69 organic or mostly organic farmers in 23 states representing a wide range of soils and climates. Organic farms were found to be two and one-half times more productive per unit of energy consumed than conventional farms. Profits on organic farms were lower due to the rotation system under which from 30 to 50 percent of the land may be planted with nitrogen fixing legumes at any one time. But when long-term costs such as soil erosion, depleted nutrient reserves, and water pollution are taken into account, organic farms become more competitive.

The study, done in conjunction with a Rodale Press mail survey, found that there are many small-scale organic farms in the Northeast, and numerous large-scale farms in the West and Midwest. Several case studies examined farms of 300-500 acres in size on which no synthetic fertilizers or pesticides were used; one strictly organic farm in Texas was 1400 acres. And contrary to popular belief, most organic farmers have not regressed to agriculture as it was practiced in the 1930's. Organic farmers use modern farm machinery, and recommended crop varieties. Some of the farmers questioned the adaptability of newer seed varieties though, because they were selected for performance in chemical-intensive systems.

Extrapolating the data available to them, the researchers estimated that there are more than 24,000 organic and partially-organic farmers in the U.S. The data also indicated that organic farmers are, as a group, well-educated. Over 50% of the farmers studied and surveyed had attended college. Most of the farmers in the case studies were highly experienced and were evenly distributed in all age categories. 42% were 50 or more years old and 10% were 65 or older.

Farmers are motivated toward adoption of organic methods by a wide range of factors, according to the report. Soil health, food safety, environmental protection, and soil and water conservation were primary considerations. Other frequently stated motivations included the belief that organic agriculture produces food of superior quality and protects human and animal health.

Weed control on most farms was achieved primarily by crop rotations, tillage, mowing, and to a lesser extent by selective application of herbicides and hand weeding. Preventive methods were emphasized. Some of the farmers said that weed problems were most serious during the early stages of transition from traditional to organic methods, and that the infestations subsided once the rotational cycle was established.

Most farmers in the study felt that insect pests were adequately controlled in the field by selective rotations and natural insect predators. Vegetable and orchard crops were the most difficult to protect with non-chemical methods. Several growers indicated that populations of beneficial insects, including ladybird beetles, had increased in their fields since they ceased using pesticides. There was a strong consensus that long-term and heavy application of insecticides had eliminated many natural insect predators, thus making non-chemical control of insects more difficult.

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Let's Opt for Co-ops

By Laurie Lynn Kelly

Is it possible to beat the high cost of food? Energy? Funerals? Perhaps you would like a stronger voice in the kind or quality of products you buy. Perhaps you enjoy working and organizing with people to achieve common goals.

A consumer coop may be for you.

Consumer cooperatives have grown from the same roots as labor unions and representative politics. Although the Industrial Revolution raised the standard of living for many throughout the world, its by-products included long hours, frightful working conditions, picayune wages, and unprecedented unemployment.

Curiously, one of the more successful English industrialists of the early nineteenth century founded the consumer cooperative movement. Robert Owen felt that if humans were treated with the consideration generally accorded to machines, humans would repay the investment handsomely. Owen persuaded an Irish landlord friend to sublet land to tenants for cooperative experiments. County Claire, Ireland, was notorious for crime and poverty, but in a few years the fledgling cooperative transformed the land to an area of prosperity and good will. Unfortunately, the landlord lost the land gambling and left for France. The coop disbanded.

Sixteen tons, and what do you get? Another day older and deeper in debt.

St. Peter don't you call me now 'cause I can't go: I sold my soul to the company store.

The "company store" oppressed many of England's working class. Often workers were paid money which could only be exchanged in stores owned by their employers. Prices were high, and it was virtually impossible to get ahead. When employers were forced to pay employees in English pounds, supply-side competition became possible.

This fostered the first successful consumer coop. The wool and cotton weavers of Rochdale community in England were simultaneously replaced by power mills and depressed by low wages. The Rochdale Equitable Pioneers established themselves in 1844. They founded a store for food, clothing, and shelter; purchased land to provide jobs, and established a self-supporting home colony. The cooperative structure was very similar to modern cooperative enterprise. Membership was open, and all members shared capital and risk. Large financial contributions were not grounds for preferential influence: adult male members possessed one vote in group decisions. After all operating costs, captial interest, reinvestment, and savings were paid, workers received shares of "trading surplus", or dividends. The six-hundred member coop was committed to selling pure, unadulterated goods and educating members for cooperative living.

Although women in Western society have traditionally shopped for food and other provisions, women were not active members in the early coops. The first Women's Cooperative Guild commenced in 1883. In addition to practicing cooperative economics, the Women's Guilds initiated and propelled minimum wage, child labor, maternity and child welfare legislation, and various other human services.

Today, food cooperatives account for most consumer coop trade. Food coops can be group buying clubs, storefronts, or even supermarkets. Usually, 10-50% of the food dollar can be saved, when compared to prevailing retail food prices.

Bellingham has at least two food coops. Mike Cox, an organizer of a local buying group, says "the Food Web is an opportunity to gain control of a vital link in the food distribution network. Since the Food Web bypasses the packaging and processing of foods, participants get high quality foods at low prices." Food Webbers fill out order sheets monthly during the school year. Members from each household meet and combine their lists to achieve maximum buying power. Other members purchase the food, cut cheese, or organize the food at a pick-up house. Prices are usually low. Cheese, for instance, costs around $2.10 per pound. When possible, local farmers and businesses are supported.

The Bellingham Community Coop on 10th and Harris offers shoppers and members a variety of staples, produce, cheeses, and some processed foods. Food grown without synthetic pesticides or fertilizers are also available at the Coop. A six-person paid staff orders the food, and Coop members run the cash register, stock the shelves, and clean. Although one doesn't need to put in hours to shop, members who work at the Coop receive discounts on food purchased. Members who loan the Coop $3.00 per month also receive a discount. This capital and labor keeps the Coop financially solvent. Shoppers bring jars, sacks, and paper bags to save on packaging costs, as most of the food is in bins or casks. The coop hopes to expand in the future, in order to make whole foods available to more shoppers, and to offer services like an in-store childcare center.

Consumer energy coops have recently come into their own. Groups can buy wood, natural gas, insulation, and solar panels together. Currently, the Whatcom Solar Association is forming a solar coop.

Funerals are notoriously expensive, and in most cases, friends and relatives of the deceased are in no position to dicker. Most funeral homes are reputable, but all are expensive.

Peoples Memorial Association members can choose a simple funeral service and burial. In exchange for assured business, member funeral directors offer lower fees. Members carry cards which direct friends or relatives to participating funeral homes. Of course, not all coop members need to die at once.

Although many people who start coops have great ideas and a will to

make coops work, they sometimes lack business expertise. Futhermore, banks are often hesitant to lend to coops. The National Consumer Cooperative Bank (NCCB) can enable coops to be financially solvent, efficient, and successful. The NCCB lends money and offers technical assistance to cooperatives. Advisors and publications strengthen coops with information on budget management, marketing, and human relations. Brian Burhans, of the Bellingham Community Coop, said that the Reagan administration has asked funding for the NCCB to be rescinded for 1981 and 1982. The administration has implied that the NCCB represents unnecessary federal spending, but this is erroneous. Funding for the NCCB will be repaid with interest, as all coops must buy stock in the bank when they receive a loan. Fortunately, since Congress chartered the bank, only Congress can revoke its funding. This would require the approval of the House Banking Committee which has supported the NCCB so far. At the NCCB's founding, it was stated: "The Congress finds a need for the establishment of a National Consumer Cooperative Bank which will make available necessary financial and technical assistance to cooperative self-help endeavors as a means of strengthening the Nation's economy." (Public Law 95:351) With the Reagan administration's move toward decentralism, such a coop bank will be especially necessary.

If you would like to join, create, or support the cooperative movement, the following organizations can help you on your way.

Food Web Forms
Huxley Student Lounge
Floor 05, ES
WWU, Bellingham, WA 98225

Bellingham Community Food Coop
1000 Harris
Bellingham, WA 98225

Whatcom Solar Association
217 Prospect Street
Bellingham, WA 98225

Peoples Memorial Association, Inc.
309 Areis Building
2366 Eastlake
Seattle, WA

National Consumer Cooperative Bank
2001 S Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20009

The Clean Air Act
Up in Smoke?

By Judy Redenbaugh

The Federal Clean Air Act was passed by Congress in 1970 with the intent of bringing about a substantial improvement in the nation's air quality. The standards outlined in the act are designed to provide the minimum air quality needed to protect human health, as well as to prevent deterioration of vegetation and property. They cover seven major pollutants: sulfur dioxide, particulates, carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen, hydrocarbons, lead, and ozone. If these substances are inhaled in sufficient amounts, they are known to be hazardous to human health. This year this important act is up for reauthorization by Congress, and faces continuation, modification, or abolishment.

The Clean Air Act has significantly mitigated the nation's air pollution problem since its enactment in 1970. It has led to the invention and use of successful pollution control devices and techniques which have greatly improved U.S. environmental quality. For example, between 1973 and 1978, the average annual concentrations of carbon monoxide decreased by 33%, sulfur dioxide decreased by 20%, and suspended particulates dropped 7% nationwide. Between 1974 and 1978, in twenty-three major metropolitan areas, there was an 18% reduction in the number of days in which air quality was classified as unhealthful.

More locally, the ASARCO copper smelter in Tacoma, emitted 5,100 tons of particulates, 200,000 tons of sulfur dioxide, and 400 tons of arsenic into the air each year before establishment of the Clean Air Act in 1970. The quantity of particulates and arsenic emitted have been reduced by 85% while the sulfur dioxide emitted has been reduced by 55%. These improvements show that satisfactory progress in pollution control has been achieved as a result of the Clean Air Act. Despite these successes, the act faces considerable opposition in the legislature.

An important issue in the congressional debate over renewal of the Clean Air Act will be the question of cost-benefit analysis. Some argue that the national air quality standards should be set by balancing the cost of control measures against the acceptable level of air quality for health and the environment. Many maintain that the law already provides enough leeway for taking costs into account in meeting air quality standards; nevertheless, industry as well as the environment could gain by a reconsideration of the current methods used in meeting the standards. But, as Congress has determined, cost should not be entered into establishing the national ambient air quality standards themselves. This would not only restrict the public's right to know what levels are needed to protect their environment, but would also attempt to put a price on human health.

It has also been suggested that "adverse health effects" as defined in the Act, should include only those health effects which are life-threatening or cause incapacitating illness. This would allow harmful pollutants into the environment that cause ill health effects with chronic exposure. Air quality standards must reflect more than levels that "threaten life" or "incapacitate individuals". The standards should also protect more than those citizens most resistant to health effects of air pollutants. The health of sensitive individuals (those with respiratory disease, senior citizens, etc.) must also be protected by the standards.

It has also been proposed by some that Congress require that the Environmental Protection Agency increase the number of days each year when industries may legally violate health standards. This would erode the intent of the original act which required that prevention of ill health effects would be the main focus. Such a change would undoubtedly bring an increase in pollution related illnesses.

These are just some of the issues Congress will face this year as the Clean Air Act goes up for reauthorization. Hopefully, Congress will realize the far-reaching effects their decisions will have on people's right to breathe clean air and live in a healthy environment.

Animal manure, crop residues, nitrogen fixed by legumes, and organic fertilizers such as leather dust and cottonseed meal, were the chief sources of plant nutrients and organic materials utilized on the farms. Terraces, grassed waterways, strip cropping, and contour farming were commonly used and there was little evidence of erosion on the farms studied. Critical areas such as steep slopes or shallow soils were usually maintained in sod. Most of the farmers said that since they had converted to organic methods infiltration was noticeably improved, and there was more water available for crops.

All in all, the report places organic farming in a very favorable light. "The increasing cost of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and energy inputs and/or their uncertain availability may lead to increased organic farming in the future," the report concludes, but "further impetus to increased interest in organic farming may be brought about by increasing public concern for the adverse effects of conventional agriculture on the environment." Whether for economic reasons or environmental concerns, perhaps we can look forward to increased prevalence of farming practices which will help steer us away from a collision course with nature.

If you would like to dig into organic farming on a part-time basis this summer, consider the Farm Apprenticeship Program sponsored by the Washington Small Farm Network, and Tilth. The program will link up people who want to work on organic farms with organic farmers who can use the help. It will provide a good opportunity for people to get hands-on experience with organic farming techniques. Participants will receive a newsletter indicating where work opportunites exist on farms throughout Whatcom County and parts of Skagit County. To get involved, contact Marty Eckram or Neil Bittner at the Whatcom County Opportunity Council, P.O. Box 159, 734-5121.

An Untapped Resource

by Valerie Smith

Television has been the brunt of vehement criticism the past several years, and with good reason. Despite the negative image television has earned in the past, however, it remains an untapped resource with great educational potential. Public education concerning important environmental issues, normally a difficult and ineffectual process, could be greatly facilitated by the use of TV, with its capacity to reach millions of households with such pertinent information quickly and accurately.

It is often difficult for citizens to get reliable, objective information about environmental issues. They are bombarded by propaganda from environmentalists and pro-development organizations as well. A citizen's vote is too often determined by which propagandist argument most effectively dominates the media, rather than by intelligent examination of the issue. Television could provide access to reliable information aimed at educating the public to the basics of an issue, the alternatives, and the consequences of specific decisions.

The program to be televised could be developed by a neutral third party--a university for example, as suggested by Lawrence Susskind, Associate Professor of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT. It could be a program based simply upon discussion of the various viewpoints or a factual presentation about the problem, its recommended solutions and the opinions concerning the recommendations. It could also be a live show to give home viewers an opportunity to call in questions or opinions. This latter possibility would also be useful in policy-making negotiations to allow greater public participation.

Televised discourse would not have to be limited to only those issues up for a vote. It could also include important environmental impact assessments and regional policy debates. If the public can actively participate in the negotiation process at an early stage, the chances of time-consuming and expensive last-minute interruptions due to public dissent could be greatly reduced. People would be able to voice criticisms and suggestions early on, facilitating conflict resolution and the eventual formation of a policy generally approved by all sectors of the citizenry.

The result of such televised discussions about important environmental issues would be a well-informed public better able to synthesize competing views and perceive the whole of an issue. The present system clearly lacks accessible routes for this, and blocks the public from becoming involved in the early stages of planning and decision making. If television were so used, citizens would have this accessibility and the entire policy formation process would run more efficiently and in better accordance with public concerns.

Farewell (con't)

Chuck (At Least We Tried) Blodgett, Bob Fuit, Ernst Gayden, Paul Linholdt, Judy Redenbaugh, Leslie Hulbert, Dave Toler, Melanie Peck, Chris Pforr, Gary Wright, Chris Tiffany, David Blomstrom, Roberta Riley, and second to last but certainly not least, the indefatigueable and talented Gay Roselle, and last, John Miles, our die-hard advisor, who always provided a touch of sanity when we needed it most. And I shouldst not forget Environmental Center Oligarchs, Laurie Kelly and Mike Cox, who provided us with moral support, and raided their piggy bank to provide us with morsels of cash in times of need.

The Planet will continue its inexorable existence next year, under the steady guidance of editor-elect Jim (Nerves of Steel) Springer. The Planet will again offer a 2 credit seminar for staffers, offered through Huxley College; the seminar will be open to interested students of all major concentrations. So--I would like to extend an invitation to all students interested in layout, writing, editing, graphics, advertising, distribution, etc. to sign up for the seminar. Enthusiasm is required--experience is not. Farewell--and may next year's Planet be a success.

The Monthly Planet staff and the Environmental Center dedicate this issue to Mark Gardner, the editor, for his hard work and enthusiasm this year.

Will Rare II Make Wilderness Rare?

by Chris Burke

RARE II, the second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation, is the title of a study undertaken by the U.S. Forest Service to identify all roadless and undeveloped lands in the U.S., and to consider those lands for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (N.W.P.S). The N.W.P.S. currently includes 19 million acres of congressionally designated wilderness lands. These areas are permanently protected from any type of development.

The RARE II study was an attempt to decide the destiny of all the undeveloped land not presently protected by the N.W.P.S. For each parcel of land identified in the RARE II study, a recommendation was made suggesting one of three possible futures for the land: wilderness designation and inclusion in the N.W.P.S.; non-wilderness designation and availability for multiple-use, including timber harvesting; 'further planning' designation, indicating that the Forest Service requires more information before reaching a decision.

The Forest Service held over 200 meetings across the nation during July and August of 1977 in order to inventory unimproved lands. The final count indicated that 62 million acres of roadless, undeveloped land currently exist which are not protected by the National Wilderness Preservation System. The original RARE I report, published in 1973, identified only 53 million acres. Errors and omissions in the first report necessitated the second.

The Forest Service recognized 10 distinct alternatives upon which they could base their recommendations for the undeveloped land. The choices ranged from alternative 'A', under which no action would be taken, and no recommendations made, to alternative 'J', under which all the inventoried land would be recommended for inclusion in the N.W.P.S. In between the two extremes were alternatives which varied the relative emphasis and importance placed on economic resources and wilderness value.

The Forest Service used public response, existing laws, and their perception of public needs to determine where in the range of alternatives their official stance would fall. The final report published by the Forest Service stated that a majority of the public responses received indicated that respondents valued jobs and resources over undeveloped wilderness.

The final recommendations made by the Forest Service reflected this view. The RARE II study recommended that only 15 million of the 62 million inventoried acres be added to the Wilderness System. This recommendation requires Congressional approval. Once that approval is secured, activities which might alter the wilderness quality of the area would be permanently prohibited. Another 11 million acres were recommended for further study and planning before a permanent designation is applied. This land would remain closed to timber harvesting, but under certain conditions, it could be opened to fossil fuel and energy mineral extraction.

The remaining 36 million acres, well over half the undeveloped land identified, were recommended for non-wilderness status. A non-wilderness area would remain under the jurisdiction of existing authorities. Those authorities become responsible for deciding what combination of uses the land will be opened up to. Possibilities include recreational site development, mining, road building, and timber harvesting.

The Mt. Baker area was one of the undeveloped areas included in the RARE II study. The Forest Service has managed and maintained the wilderness character of Mt. Baker for the past 40 years. RARE II may be bringing an end to that undeveloped wilderness.

In past years the recreational demands placed on Mt. Baker as a wilderness area have steadily increased. Unfortunately the desire for timber has increased as well. RARE II recommended that the 275,000 undeveloped acres around Mt. Baker be designated non-wilderness, thereby opening the land up to development, including logging. Many local citizens and organizations disagree with the Forest Service designation of Mt. Baker as non-wilderness.

The Mt. Baker Wilderness Association in Bellingham is currently working on a plan designed to protect this area from further development. Despite their efforts to date, the Forest Service has already started to sell some of the timber from the area, with several more sales planned in the next five years.

This trend toward development is occuring not only in our local Mt. Baker area, but across the nation as well. President Reagan has nominated John Crowell for the position as Director of the U.S. Forest Service. Mr. Crowell advocates a three-fold increase in the rate of timber extraction from U.S. Forest Service land. This recommendation is not suprising, considering that Mr. Crowell previously worked as an attorney for Louisiana-Pacific Corporation, one of the largest private lumber companies working on public lands.

The development vs. wilderness issue is one that will persist for some time to come. Congressional legislation and Forest Service studies, such as RARE II, may address the problem but they will never be able to resolve the underlying issue. Attempts to quantify wilderness values have been popular in recent years. But putting an ethical question, such as the value of wilderness, into economic terms, such as dollars, only skirts the real issue.

Is there any intrinsic, unquantifiable value in an undisturbed, undeveloped ecosystem? By altering too much of our wilderness today, we reduce the chances of experiencing the answer to that question tomorrow.

Ford Administration, predicts that "there will be more energy-related changes during the next 10 to 25 years than there have been in most of our lifetimes ," and he adds, "the problem of coping with these changes and managing them efficiently will lie with those who make up America's school population."

The second limiting factor is food. Food is supplied through four biological systems: fisheries, forests, grasslands, and croplands. Each system can yield only so much before the regenerative capacity is exceeded. Overfishing of the oceans, deforestation to provide more croplands, and overgrazing of grasslands causing desertification, all threaten to overwhelm the earth's capacity to provide.

According to economist Kenneth Boulding, "what is even more ominous is that developed agriculture, especially in the United States, is extremely dependent on gasoline, not only for its energy input in the form of tractors, dryers, and agricultural machinery of all kinds, but also for artificial fertilizers, all of which virtually are derived from fossil fuels of some kind, and a great deal directly from petroleum." Also, because of increased world dependence on our production of food "the disappearance of the U.S. agricultural surplus seems a high probability."

The third real limit is pollution, whose significance can no longer be viewed as a mere "disamenity." Regarding this, the economist Emile Benoit remarks: "...The comforting assurance that adequate pollution control can be obtained, despite continued exponential growth, by devoting a small and fixed percentage of the Gross National Product to this purpose now seems to be sheer delusion. It overlooks the fact that as the natural sinks become overloaded, they will no longer automatically disperse, neutralize, and recycle our wastes--and the attempt to do so artificially can become astronomically expensive..." Regarding pollution, current economic logic seems to be "we have to have growth to be rich enough to pay for the cost of cleaning up the results of growth."

It hardly needs to be stated that current world exponential population growth is the main factor in determining how soon these limits will actually be reached.

Limits to technology itself must also be faced. Says Benoit: "It may be significant that there is now little further research on increasing the speed of message transmissions, in view of the fact that our communications are already close to the fixed speed of light and of electromagnetic impulses. Technology does not make these limits 'grow exponentially', but accepts these limits as fixed barriers to further progress along these particular lines, and shifts to other areas. Similarly, technology can't modify the waste heat effects of non-solar energy utilization..."

THE BEANSTALK PRINCIPLE

Galileo laid down a principle more than 350 years ago that stated: "No institution that undergoes a change in size does so, if it is to survive and adapt, without changing its form and shape." Today, an extrapolation of this principle has been termed the "Beanstalk Principle." It states: "For every animal, object, institution, or system, there is an optimal limit beyond which it ought not to grow." Its corollary: "Beyond this optimal size, all other elements of an animal, object, institution, or system will be affected adversely."

Further argument, elaboration of detail and exposition of opposing viewpoints are all due, but the time and space limitations here must be faced. It is greatly hoped, however, that this idea of a steady-state system has stimulated some thought in others. The purpose of this article is to alert others that there is another alternative to the current economic emergency that could work. At this truly perilous turning point solutions are called for that are neither simple nor conventional.

If we accept the nuclear progrowth argument and are wrong, the potential for disaster is greatly exacerbated. If we reject that argument, begin implementing a steady-state economy, and find that somewhere in our calculations we erred, what are the results? "We have lost time, material satisfaction, we have learned to share, and we have lost growth. We can always resume growth. What kind of error do you want to make?" To take a line from the Whole Earth Catalog: "For a healthy world to be accomplished it must first be perceived. Start here."

Marie Antoinette
"let them eat cake"
Award

Thousands of tons of surplus California Navel Oranges are being left to rot because of a federal marketing order which prohibits growers from giving such excess produce to the needy. The Justice Department is investigating possible violations of this order, and violators may face a fine of 10,000 dollars if convicted. A Department of Agriculture official, when asked why such produce could not be given away to the poor, remarked: "Oranges are not an essential food. People don't need oranges. They can take vitamins." For this remarkable statement, the Monthly Planet would like to present to this official the first annual Marie Antoinette "Let Them Eat Cake" Award.

The poem Shrike, which appeared in last issue, was inadvertently left untitled; Paul Linholdt is the author of this poem. The Planet regrets this error.

Congratulations to Gary Caves and Chris Burke, the new Environmental Center Coordinator and Program Director, respectively. Offer them your support in the coming year. Thanks to all the qualified applicants who applied. Best wishes to Bill Taylor and Megan Barton, new coordinators of the Environmental Center Library.