

CENTER FOR REFLECTION ON THE SECOND LAW

8420 Camellia Drive, Raleigh, North Carolina 27612  
919/847-5819

Affiliated with  
The Riverdale Center for Religious Research  
5801 Palisade Avenue, Bronx, New York 10471

James F. Berry  
Advisory Board  
American Teilhard Assoc.

September 17, 1986

Circular No.79

NABC II, the second North American Bioregional Congress was held at Camp Innisfree, Michigan during the last week of August. It was, in many ways a duplicate of NABC I, held in Missouri in 1984, and it was just as successful, maybe more so. About one hundred and seventy people, bioregionalists, gathered in camping conditions to exchange with each other views and information and just to be together. There were nearly thirty workshops on as many topics, ranging from forests to permaculture, to sexuality, to population, race and gender, story telling for children, politics, economics, spirituality and many more. The obvious conclusion is that bioregionalism has attracted highly able followers from just about every walk of life. And these people are trying to find the right fit for their own work into the bioregional vision. Thus, the teacher, the lawyer, the clergyperson, the farmer, the doctor, the social worker, the politician, the writer, the publisher, the feminist, the Native American find that the vision fits their own sense of right and wrong, find in it a value system that they can subscribe to. After a session like this it seems possible that bioregionalism is truly a viable way of life across the range of human activity.

Peter Borrelli has said about bioregionalism that it may be seeking to define a new religion. But I think that there are few existing established religions that do not, in essentials, affirm the same values that bioregionalism affirms. (We will have the opportunity to take this up with Borrelli at the upcoming conference on spirituality.)

It should be noted here that representation of the business community was thin. Robert Rodale was represented, a publishing house or two, some crafts enterprises, but no gung-ho advocates of the "free enterprise religion". It is probably plain that bioregionalism which seeks to curb the exploitation of earth resources is in conflict with a value system that seeks to maximize exploitation.

After three days of workshops, some nineteen committees were formed to produce statements and or resolutions on that many subjects. These were then submitted to a plenary session for debate, adoption or rejection. The rules of the gathering stipulated that all NABC II approved statements or resolutions had to have consensus and any individual could block consensus. You would think such a rule would make it altogether impossible to get anything done, but that was not the case. Given a highly skilled facilitator (Caroline Estes, a Quaker from Oregon) and a body of people who are pretty much one on the basic rightness of a bioregional approach to the world, you can get approval on some things at least. Each committee made a report and submitted something for approval. All reports were heard and all resolutions and statements either accepted as the mind of the congress or rejected. The process was long and in some cases agonizing, but we got some things done. A report of the proceedings is being prepared by the people at New Life Farm in Missouri and will be available in a few weeks. The report is going to cost about \$10. If you want a copy let me know.

I participated in the work of the committee on spirituality. Jane Blewett of the Center of Concern, a Washington Catholic think tank, was chairperson, and the job needed somebody with her skill, patience, calm, and willingness to outlast the tedious hours of debate and argument and nit picking. If you want to get into something that will take a long time,

get a diverse group together and try to find a statement on the spirit acceptable to everybody. It is not easy. The work took ten hours and went on all day and into the wee hours of the next morning. Gene Marshall of the paper Realistic Living out of Dallas Texas, was a hero in proposing language and finding ways to get around blockages. Other members were very involved in the whole process, and the fact that anything at all emerged is a wonder. But even more wonder is the fact that it was good. It was received by the plenary body with a whole lot of applause and a small but determined resistance. So, it did not get NABC II endorsement. It goes into the report as the statement of the committee which produced it along with the names of a lot of the people there who wanted to be associated with it. Basically, the statement affirms a spirituality that produces certain shifts in values and energizes actions directed at making the human a better fit in the scheme of creation. I will send a copy to anybody that asks.

For me and for many others, the joy of the congress was to be found in the conversations at mealtime. There were a lot of old friends and a lot of new friends. I mention David Haenke, Peter Berg, and Judy Goldhaft, Mariam Therese, Amy Hannon, Marnie Muller, Jack Wilcox, Michael Crofoot, Bruce Bebe, Carolyn Arcure, Milo Guthrie, Gerhardt Elston, Kirkpatrick Sale, a whole bunch of nuns. There are many names left out. These are people who will go down as founders of the movement.

\* \* \* \* \*

Accompanying this circular is the flyer announcing the conference **ECOLOGY - The Spiritual Imperative**. Please consider coming. Our principal speakers do not come out of a religious discipline. Rather, both are involved in the daily turmoil of the marketplace, one as an editor for a group that plays its role in the courtrooms of the nation; the other as a radio journalist involved in telling the nation what is happening in the world. This look at spirituality will be through the eyes of laypersons, acute but non-professional observers of the operating spirit. Responders will come out of other disciplines, academic and clerical. And it is a sure thing that the audience will have its own opinions. If you cannot come, please consider being a sponsor. We need the money. (Contributions to CFRSL are tax deductible. We were approved this month.)

\* \* \* \* \*

Readers of these circulars are familiar with the name Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen. Professor Georgescu-Roegen, Vanderbilt University, wrote the book, The Entropy Law and the Economic Process. (Harvard University Press). That book played a big part in getting this series of newsletters under way in 1980. It gave real support to the Riverdale view of the world, i.e., once you use everything up it will be gone forever. Earthstuff is not unlimited and needs to be regarded with respect from the standpoint of the economist as well as from the standpoint of the earthlover. I began a correspondence with Professor Georgescu-Roegen in 1980, and we have carried it on ever since. He has been generous in his comments on what we are doing. So Clay Stalnaker and I decided to ask him if he would come over from Nashville for a session of the CFRSL discussion group, and he has consented to come. Arrangements call for him to give a lecture at UNC, Chapel Hill on November 12th in the afternoon, to talk to the discussion group that evening, to conduct a siminar on the afternoon of the 13th at NC State University. There may be some changes, but we ought to get a good turnout for his evening here. So I urge you to come, and please give me some sign in advance if you can. I would like to know about how many will be here. This is an economist of the first rank, and he can be called a bioregionalist. He should be widely heard. (We are going to ask for a \$3.00 donation at the door. (Optional)

\* \* \* \* \*

November 12th  
7:30 p.m.  
At the Center

Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen (see above)