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First Voice: I read about this new development northeast of Durham called Treyburn. Senator Terry Sanborn has an interest in it. It will cover eight square miles and become a complete city. There will be a whole network of roads including a four-lane super highway into the heart of the place. Two golf courses are already planned. The developers are the biggest in the nation. They have millions of dollars and political connections. These guys are thinking big. And when the Outer Loop gets completed around Raleigh with all the new development that will bring on we will have one huge metropolis around here. Los Angeles won't have anything on us. Won't that be something? You know what they say? Grow or die! Grow or die! Why do you talk down things like this? Don't you believe in growth and progress? Stop trying to tell people to quit consuming. America doesn't work that way.

Second Voice: You know that eight square miles the developers are going to turn into something that looks like Los Angeles. That is the prettiest country you ever saw. One time I went to a meeting of the Eno River Association up there on a bend of the Eno. We were on a meadow along side a woods, and the river made a one hundred and eighty degree turn around it. There were plants there, a biologist was telling us, that grew no place else. The scene needed a poet to describe its beauty. Anybody who would let a chemical company get within a hundred miles of the place is out of his mind. But Treyburn is intended to be home to chemical plants and other kinds of industry which pollute. Industry is coming in from Germany and Holland and Japan. Three rivers flow through the area and drain into the big lake Raleigh gets its water from. The eight square miles are full of forests and wildlife. I believe that the reason God made skunks and 'possums and raccoons and rabbits and other wild things and the habitats they live in is because God liked it that way. It says in the Bible that He found what He made to be good. I figure that is right. I think the Lord does not like to see His handiwork messed up. Humans are not supposed to be hogs or vandals. They can just leave parts of the natural world alone.

I don't like chemical companies and industries that pour poisons into the ground and into rivers and lakes and wipe out forests and pave over creation. And I think we have enough cities already. This is North Carolina. It is not California. New population will be people who move in here from somewhere else, people who don't care about our forests and animals and rivers; people who will vote for the continued transformation of our countryside into concrete and fast food joints. When we invite these alien economic forces in we turn our destiny over to them. We are no longer in control of our own fate. Some big shot in Amsterdam, or Pittsburg, or San Francisco will be making decisions that mean life or death for us. They will promise that their activity will be clean as a mountain stream and anybody with any sense will know that they are lying. The reason they come here is because their production costs will be lower. Production costs are a function of labor, taxes, utilities, and waste disposal. Somebody is promising them something in all these areas. They are not coming because they love us. They are coming to use us and our endowment, and then to flee when the bottom line tells them costs are lower somewhere else. The North Carolina legislature cannot be relied on to look out for the environment. Their history is that of voting down or severely weakening every bill intended to protect rivers and streams and ground water. They are "business oriented" as are city councils and county commissions. The developers get willing listeners as they set out to prove that poison is healthy and white is black.

About this growth business -- when a young man gets to be about six feet tall his family hopes he will stabilize at that height. Nobody wants him to grow to fifteen feet. So it is with economies. At some level sustainability rather than growth becomes normative. Continual high rates of growth are unreal although there are few economists who tell us that. (For an exception subscribe to "The Human Economy Newsletter", Box 14, Economics Department, Mankato State University, Mankato, MN 56001 -- "Nothing can be economically or politically sound that is not first biologically sound".)

Think about roadbuilding. Roads are needed so construction firms are hired to build them. The contractors assemble an inventory of equipment, and they hire and train workers and arrange for suppliers. They build the roads. But when they get through they do not discard the machinery, let the workers go and shut off supplies. That would be disruptive of the economy. The workers would not have income and families would be in distrewss. Contractors would go broke. So it is found to be necessary to build more roads. Roadbuilding becomes a permanent institution, an establishment. Economic health is measured in terms of its activity. We begin to build roads just to be building roads. We have created a monster.

One measure of the monster is in the inventory of very expensive heavy equipment in which huge amounts of money have been invested; bulldozers, earthmovers, graders, pavers. If that equipment is not in use the economy goes into recession. Contractors do not purchase machinery to have it sit idle. It can only be amortized in doing what it is built to do. So businessmen, workers, politicians, and most everybody else wants those machines in use. It is the only way that substantial numbers of people have access to income. The bottom line is income and the key to income is employment and the only employment these particular people are qualified for is operating machinery; and the only thing this heavy machinery can do is to clear and shape for the automobile land that has not already been cleared and shaped. We are now controlled by our machines.

The reason that that eight square mile area called Treyburn must be developed is because there exists the capacity to do it. We can do it so we must do it. Even if the groups fighting Treyburn are successful in stopping it, the developers with all that money and the contractors with all that capacity will have to find another place. The way this comes out, our dedication to growth and our compulsion to work, combined with our philosophy of work/income, require us to wreck the natural world, to destroy the context of life, our environment.

The same sort of thing controls the consumer industry. The idea is to produce and market as much as possible at ever-growing efficiency. The idea ought to be to produce as little as is necessary. The contradiction is typified perhaps with paper. The TV ad for Kleenex shows a roomful of the stuff with the message that it ought to be used lavishly. Who perceives the insanity of destroying trees to achieve profligate waste. Sensible people conserve trees. Industry thinks its job is to turn trees into instant trash. That is the metaphor for a capitalist/consumer/materialist society. The bigger the trash heap the greater the prosperity. We live in a stupefied trance trusting industry and Madison Avenue and receiving no enlightenment from our leading economists.

It is not so much Treyburn specifically that I oppose. It is the whole idea that any development is a boon to the local polity, that all growth is good. An economy is healthy only insofar as it is sustainable over a very long period and sound politically, economically and biologically. Nobody has convinced me that Treyburn is anything but a money-making scheme thought up by the rich and the powerful to further their own selfish interests. For us to buy off on their scheme is to make the person who bought the Brooklyn Bridge look like a financial genius.

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