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First Voice: Would you slow down a little bit and tell me again what this ecological, bioregional, green kick you are on is all about. I don't understand it very well; particularly when you accuse the economists of getting everything upside down. How is it that you are so right and they are so wrong?

Second Voice: I rail so about the economists because I think that most of them are not doing their jobs. Why are they not alarmed about the fact that human activity, which is to say economic activity, is destroying the earth's life support structure, without which no economic activity is possible. Why are they not pointing out that ruined air and water, and soil, depleted forests and reduced diversity in life forms has consequences of the most catastrophic importance. The highly visible economists and just about every politician can't seem to think in any terms but growth and to urge more of it. "In order to have economic prosperity we have to do more and more of what we are already doing" is what they are telling us. They don't seem to realize that they are giving positive feedback which causes runaway in any system. This society, this economy organizes people and material and technology into specialties, Adam Smith's classic "division of labor". People and plant and equipment can do one thing only. The best place to look for an example may be in the automobile centered condition of the United States. We have an enormous capacity for making automobiles and supporting their use. Five-member families may possess five automobiles and spend a major share of their resources on their purchase and operation.

What happens when the capacity to make and support automobiles goes idle? Workers in the industry and investors in it and the whole society go into the traumatic shock of unemployment. Capacity is not being used to do the only thing it can do. We say that the tragedy for the people is loss of jobs. That is really not true. The true tragedy is loss of income. Keep that in mind. The deepest tenet of American religion is that forty hours of hard work every week is necessary to attain to respectability and an income barely adequate to a decent life; and that a considerable anxiety must be an essential presence in the worker's psyche. They are more docile when they are afraid.

This can be generalized into saying that people and things must be occupied at their occupations, working at their specialties. Work must be ongoing and there has to be enough of it to keep almost everybody busy about 2,000 hours a year. And product must rise continually. We must produce more this year than we did last year and more than that next year. That is because of something called productivity which must, in this system, be continually improved. So if the same number of workers are to be employed there must be more product. Ignore, for the present, the problem of markets and consumption. But do take note that the product has to go into discard quickly so that its replacement can move through an empty pipeline.

I don't think I have to prove that the automobile is ruining the environment, the context of living, for plants and animals and humans. They poison the air, require that immense, I mean immense, areas be paved over so they can roll smoothly and rapidly, and be parked when idle. Their social effects are poisonous also--the litany of evil that the automobile gives rise to is a long one. The wise thing is to reduce drastically the use of and dependence on the automobile. But we are on a treadmill that forbids us even to think about a drastic reduction. At least we cannot think about it as long as we cling to an economic system in

