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The Spring, 1987 issue of "The Amicus Journal" carries a book review, written here, of Charlene Spretnak's The Spirituality of Green Politics. The AJ (122 E. 42nd Street, NY, NY, 10168) is the publication of the Natural Resources Defense Council. "NRDC is a membership organization dedicated to protecting America's natural resources and improving the human environment. With offices in New York, Washington, DC, and San Francisco, and a full time staff of lawyers, scientists and environmental specialists; NRDC combines legal action, scientific research, and citizen education in a highly effective environmental protection program. NRDC's major accomplishments have been in the areas of energy policy and nuclear safety; toxic substances; air and water pollution; urban transportation; natural resources and conservation; and the international environment. NRDC has 60,000 members and is supported by tax deductible contributions" (from the title page). Peter Borrelli, a man of vast sensitivity, is the editor of the Amicus Journal.

The Amicus Journal is doing a masterful job of articulating, two journalistic levels below that of the daily newspaper, the depth of environmental degradation this country is experiencing. In the latest issue the environmental crimes of the Koppers Company in Oroville, California are detailed. For many years Koppers has been dumping a wood preservative named "Pentachlorophenol" (PCP) into the ground. The article, written by Raquel Skolnik, illustrates the immense danger posed by bottom line morality and corporate greed (corporate greed is ordinary human greed greatly refined and raised exponentially to a level beyond human comprehension) to the future well-being of all life.

Some quotes:

A hundred years ago this was gold country. Tailings from the mines are still scattered everywhere. In Oroville the local wood treating operations dumped their chemical wastewaters on the tailings. That was in the 1960s before anyone realized that the tailings and the soil underneath them were not impenetrable barriers that the chemicals did not sit there forever but leached down through the layers of clay and gravel and rocks, and finally found their way into the ground water lying cool and dark and still far below.

...To an outsider the consequences of the contamination in Oroville are alarming and grotesquely visible. Pets that run up to you as you knock on doors show typical symptoms of environmental illness. Many are deformed---three-toed dogs, tailless cats, animals with tumorous growths hanging from their sides...

...then one day in 1983 Jim went out to feed his chickens and noticed some of them trembling severely, staggering and falling...after a couple of months we lost all our Rhode Island Reds.

...Don and Charlotte Speegle raised horses and dogs... In the winter of the first year they had a litter in which several puppies were born with severe deformities and died within a few hours.

...Today the Sealy's farm has no more animals except two pet dogs and a cockatiel who drink piped-in water. The once bountiful fields are not cultivated or planted; they refuse to sell crops they feel might be tainted with pesticides.

...Michele never had so much as a cavity in her life. Now she is undergoing bone grafting for deterioration of her jaw.

...For four years the company and the State of California engaged in a battle of red tape: public meetings, proposals, counter proposals, work cleanup plans followed by revisions and revised revisions. There were headlines about law suits and penalties. Hundreds of thousands of dollars spent-- mostly on paperwork. As far as Smith and Kerschner know, Koppers has never paid any money in actual fines.

The Amicus Journal points out this kind of violation of the ecology in article after article, issue after issue. Other publications do some of this also. So there is a segment of the population that is very well informed about how badly the natural world is faring. What is troubling is the failure of the major news organizations to inform the larger population of the looming catastrophe. They do report major ecological disasters but they do not give a coherent picture by way of competent commentary or expert analysis. One wonders why.

Suddenly, realization dawns. The major news media are, at bottom, sales organizations. Advertizing revenues pay most of their costs. The news organizations are part of the structure, corporations themselves, vital partners in the system that oppresses the earth in pursuit of profits. Much normal economic activity is profitable only because the earth can be used as a waste disposal dump in the way that the Koppers company uses the area surrounding Oroville. Ecologists are not going to find important support for their causes in Dan Rather or any other media whose income depends on advertizing.

More and more the contradictions become apparent. The growth/progress mode our society is in, directly conflicts with good sense. Abusing the earth is a stupidity that must be stopped. Life depends on the earth and the earth functions according to its own dynamics. We must deal with the earth on the earth's terms. Absolutely-- without question. To poison the earth is to poison the life system. Corporations do not have the kind of intelligence to understand that. The earth, to a corporation is a resource, an externality without rights. See what Champion Paper does to the Pigeon river.

"Preserve the source", the biblical and common sense injunction carries little weight in this society. Corporate logic and corporate ethics dominate the market place. It is our own fault that it does. I have been reproaching main line economists for some time for not inventing a new economics. I ought not do that. They do not design the economic system. They just study it and try to explain it on its own terms. They are not interested in change. Those who bring about change are prophets and holy (or unholy) people. You can not just point out in terms of common sense what is wrong and expect it to be corrected. The thing to do is excite religious fervor. Jeremy Rifkin once wrote about this in a book called The Emerging Order, in which he sought to show that great changes in the United States have been energized by evangelicals. His argument was persuasive in the cases of the Revolution and Abolition. Maybe he is right.

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We are working on a Fall conference. Somehow it has got around that we are going to focus on economics. There have been inquiries from California, Arizona and Maine(!). asking about it. Maybe we could do something on a "new" economics as part of something like "How the Greens Perceive the World". We can do it over Halloween again and celebrate the Earth again in an appropriate way. I ask for comment and suggestions. Will you come?

Advisors to the CFRSL include:

Peter Berg, Thomas Berry, Wendell Berry, Hal Crowther, Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, David Haenke, Hazel Henderson, Evelyn Mattern, Charles Mulholland, Anne Pflaum, Robert Rodale, Kirkpatrick Sale, Jane Sharp, Charlene Spretnak, Brian Swime.