

Ernstraud Magazine

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happiness sharing as a way to peace

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§1 Proving To You That You Can Do It

In one specific area, my job performance was 80% failure. My supervisors could have said "we won't give you another assignment in that field until *you* prove to *us* that you can do it." Instead, they took the approach "we are going to prove to *you* that you can do it." They gave me an easy assignment and plenty of time. Success changed my self image.

Can we generally have this effect on people around us? Can we prove to our neighbors that they can do the right thing? I have been called on to tune pianos in messy settings. The pianos soon match their surroundings: paper wads, pieces of candy, toys, pencils and other objects are strewn all over and within the instruments. In contrast, clean and tidy surroundings set up the expectation of good behavior, and the well-respected pianos remain clean and properly maintained.

Now the great leap of faith: if people grumble when plastic grocery bags are outlawed, can we encourage good behavior and let people demonstrate their ability to do the right thing? If we "environmental" voters bring our own canvas bags and set a cheerful example, do you suppose we can influence our neighbors by using exemplary actions instead of laws?

§ 2 A Poem about Generation

The house I occupy
Does not shelter the presently homeless.
If I did not have a house either,
How would the homeless come to
Recognize his homelessness?

Except for minerals like salt,
What I eat was once alive.
Did I bring about its death?
Because my food did not spring forth
spontaneously in the wild,
It was cultivated for my consumption.
Did I bring about its life?

Physically I am the top of a food chain.
Intellectually there is not even a
Definition for the top of the chain.
Is my intellectual death (wrongness)
Or my life (rightness)(house)
Merely a prerequisite for
The next element in the chain?

04 December 2004

§ 3 Civilization: the Absence of Retribution

Those who do *not* intend public correctional institutions to be instruments of rehabilitation and redemption are the people who are still waiting to realize their own redemption. Let us extend patience and hope to these people.

Just as hurting people hurt people,
so do healed people heal people.
One road to healing is to heal others.
Remember,
what you give out is what comes back to you.



Prisoners may obtain some relief through talking about themselves, taking classes, and otherwise developing themselves. Beyond that, however, lies the even more powerful personal growth that comes through fostering some other life form. The "bird man of Alcatraz" is one illustration of the healing influence obtained from living beings. Gardening, forestry, farming, animal husbandry, nature conservation, pet care--anything involved with nurturing living things--will be therapeutic, uplifting, and inspiring to those who need help improving their own lives.

§4 Do Healthy Lives Cost Jobs?

Recent headlines have asserted that curbing environmental pollution will cost **jobs**. On the other hand, rampant pollution is known to cost **lives**. Let us change the job situation so that we do not perpetuate injurious conditions--so that full employment will not kill people.

Let us preserve physical, mental, and spiritual health: physical health as in freedom from man-made hazards and preventable diseases; mental health as in positive attitudes of loving ourselves so that we have love to share with others; spiritual health as in developing empathy which promotes equal well-being throughout the whole human family.

An economic system takes known natural and human resources and distributes them over measurable needs. If the system rewards some people at the expense of others, we seek to adjust the system so that it will serve all of us fairly. It takes resolve to reduce pollution health risks first, then arrange the economic consequences accordingly, constructively absorbing the workforce which was previously generating environmental damage. We are not slaves to the present harmful state of affairs, and must not be passive victims of bad conditions. Intelligence is the ability to reconfigure society's demands so that the jobs we ask people to do are constructive, not destructive. We will redistribute social burdens to reduce environmental health costs and to distribute the resulting costs fairly over a healthier population: we will create the right jobs.

It does take some social cooperation to achieve this net result. Shall we set out together to get there?