

This Is The Final Issue of HOPE

The time has come for me to move on with my life. I have spent too much time reading and thinking for the past three years and what I have learned has changed me. As I peered into the smoke of our history, the truth about our culture stung my eyes and filled them with tears. But one can only go so far away from the mainstream before the ones you love around you begin to suffer. They can not understand the reasons why you have changed, but they can feel the growing distance between your new attitudes and emotions and the ones that they were used to.

Writing HOPE magazine helped me to cope with some very difficult times. Writing HOPE allowed me to believe that I was returning something to my community that was of value. Now I am no longer sure that I was.

Communication is a very complicated process. It begins with an emotional impulse from within the sender that he attempts to put into words based upon his own understanding of what certain words mean. Those words must then be distributed through some medium and capture the attention of an interested human receiver at another location. All mediums today, however, whether they are (print, radio or television) are extremely cluttered and most working people haven't got the time (or the inclination) to stray too far off the beaten path of topics and ideas. Television has over-stimulated us and I fear that it is decreasing our capacity to concentrate.

If the message survives the interference and noise in the medium itself and attracts an audience, a receiver then begins interpreting it according to his own understanding of what the words in it mean. The listener's personality and life experiences may be completely different from the sender's and the same words may mean completely different things to each party. The message may be entirely irrelevant to the receiver and the emotions evoked in the receiver may be radically different from what the sender intended.

Suppose that a classical musician decided to share his deep love of music with the general public. First, he assembled the world's greatest musicians together and booked the finest concert hall in the land. Next, from his personal collection, he selected only the most beautiful and most important pieces of music ever written. Finally, he arranged for the best possible recording of the concert and had the signal digitally mastered and transmitted on the highest quality stereo broadcast channels on the planet. Despite all his careful preparation, however, when the concert was aired most people never even listened to his program and fewer still experienced anything like the depth of joy that he had tried to convey to his audi-

ence. Many people simply never knew about the concert, many others ignored his beautiful music as the dial on their radios passed over his station on the way to their favourite hard rock channel next to it. Many people heard only noise when his music sounded. Some made fun of it and others even got angry at the sounds that they heard.

Despite having perfected the message and the means of transmitting it, the musician's concert failed to have any lasting influence on the public's musical knowledge or preferences. While for a moment or two it may have attracted the attention of a few new listeners who favored a particular passage, it was primarily only those who already appreciated his work that listened to the concert.

All too often, I am afraid, those of us "on the left" believe that if only we could choose the right words or compose the right message, or improve our communications delivery system, then we could successfully educate the people and influence their attitudes, values and behaviors. But like the musician, we may be expecting too much. Our song of compassion and hope may truly be irrelevant to most listeners in today's cynical, look-out-for-yourself society. Perhaps we really are naive to believe that our music can ever rekindle the optimism and love that the ideology of the right has obliterated. What if our message is just no longer believable? What if the majority of people are just not interested in what we have to say? What if to them even our best words are merely an unpleasant noise, an offensive reminder of a delusion from the past? What if our obsession with technology and entertainment has altered the cognitive capacity of our citizens and eliminated their will to concentrate and investigate independently? What if the toxins of greed and despair have changed the spiritual code and the genetic chemistry of our species? Maybe it really is safer to hide in the malls and the movie theatres than to face the reality of life in the street.

Anyway, I've been at it for far too long. I need a rest. God bless you all and good luck in the future.

Some Exceptional Publications Worth Reading:

Discourse & Disclosure, 3296 Nixon Drive, Osgoode, ON K0A 2W0, Editor: Sue Potvin (613) 826-1033 phone, (613) 826-2710 fax, Published monthly, \$2.00 @ copy

The Michael Journal, 1101 Principale St, Rougemont, QE J0L 1M0, (514) 469-2209 phone, (514) 469-2601 fax, Published 6X @ year, Subscriptions \$20.00 for 4 years

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Almost everything in the material world today is created using an incredibly complex web of processes and interrelationships. Our technologies and production techniques embody the accumulated history of civilization, the intergeneration transfer of knowledge, skills and ideas. Even this simple paper that you are now reading only exists because tens of thousands of people have devoted a portion of their lives to creating the resources necessary to bring such a product about. Just think for a moment about what must be in place for you to be able to read this paper.

Writers must write (and eat and drink coffee), first their drafts, perhaps with a pencil or pen and paper, which themselves require wood and lead and the machinery to process them, electricity to run the machines, trucks to carry both the raw materials and finished pencils back and forth throughout the marketplace. Roads, of course introduce the need for asphalt, paint and new tools and machinery, more laborers, more drivers, more dispatchers, etc. ...and we haven't even covered anything beyond the paper and pencil for the first draft yet.

Eventually there comes the final version of the story, probably typed into a computer (just imagine the number of processes involved in creating one of those), and imaged on a printing device, both of which sit on a sturdy desk in a house or office that was built using brick and wood and glass and plumbed and wired and heated with gas, ...are you getting the idea yet of just how complex the interrelationships that I'm talking about really are? Never mind then the editor's equipment, the printing presses, the newsprint factories, the inks and chemicals, the delivery vans and all of the various materials and sub-systems involved in producing each of them.

All this complexity, however, can be reduced down to three common components. All that we create is derived from three basic ingredients: raw materials, labor and profit. Leaving profit and interest payments (which are really just another form of profit) aside for a moment, one could say that everything we know comes into being by combining only two ingredients: raw materials and labor.

Every component or part or machine that is used along the chain of production and distribution can itself be broken down further into its raw materials, labor and profit components. This step may have to be repeated many, many times with each component before you reach the ultimate source, that is to say the true raw material which comes from the ground,

A Few Parting Words About Profit

the sea, or the air, but if you continue to devolve the products and materials and equipment that we use everyday and trace every sub-component back to its source, you will eventually reach the physical planet, or our inherited natural resources, every time. Even all of our power sources (a very important raw material) originate ultimately from mother nature.

But we don't pay mother nature for the resources that we take from her. We don't dig holes and bury money to compensate her, so ultimately our raw materials themselves are free. They can be viewed as either a gift from mother nature (if you believe she willingly donates her bounty) or as a theft from mother nature (if you believe her consent was never given). Either way, as a cost, raw materials can be eliminated from our equation.

Reformulating our equation, it now reads labor + profit can produce everything that we need to enjoy life. Again leaving profit aside for the moment, the equation becomes simply labor alone can produce everything that we need. Labor produces the machines which increase our productivity and reduce our need for more labor. Labour alone refines nature's free resources into usable materials, components and finished products. Labor alone invents, assembles and distributes everything that we need to live comfortably on this planet. Therefore, if we could find a medium of exchange that accurately reflected only the amount of labor that was embodied in a product, we could deal quite simply with this element of our equation. That our current market-based, monetary system fails to do this well can be clearly seen by comparing the wide variety of hard-physical labor-intensive activities that pay extremely low wages to the range of high paying, but labor-lite, management positions.

Let us now return to the only remaining component of our equation, profit. What, in fact, is profit? Profit is the excess of price over cost. Profit is the amount of money received from customers that is left over after all costs (including a supposedly fair labor rate) are paid out to all who have helped produce and distribute the item or service sold. Most people explain it or justify it as a reward for taking a risk. But what kind of risk are they talking about? A risk of physical injury or loss of life? ...no, obviously not, or else all those people toiling in unsafe working conditions or dangerous, toxic environments, especially in many third world countries, would be en-

titled to enormous profits which obviously they are not receiving through their impoverished wages. Well then, how about the risk of wasting your life in a meaningless job doing repetitive, soul-destroying tasks? No not that kind of risk either ...witness the number of minimum wage workers caught up in that kind of work. How about the risk that you might lose your job or all or part of your means of earning a living from your own labor? Nope, that kind of risk doesn't qualify either. Look at the soaring rate of layoffs and part-time positions ...has the level of compensation through wages risen accordingly?

The only risk that is normally rewarded by profit is the risk that the investor may lose all or a part of his "financial investment" (which is really just his previously earned or stored profits). Oddly enough the only risk supported doesn't entail any labor component at all. The investor "earns" his right to share in the income of the borrower without ever having to lift a productive finger himself. The owner or manager of the business must then overcharge the customer to compensate for this levy plus by an extra amount (over and above his true costs) to satisfy his own lust for wealth. Profit is really just an arbitrary amount taken from the customer in excess of what is needed to fairly compensate everyone who contributed their labor to make the transaction possible.

Profit is so deeply ingrained in our market system that it now directs and controls society's development. Profit has moved investments away from useful, productive, product improvements towards profitable but non-productive and even the wasteful use of nature's limited resources. Profits add enormously to all of our costs and are the leading cause of inflation. Profits clearly do not serve the best interests of the majority of the earth's citizens and if a better exchange system for trading labor could be developed, most people would welcome the opportunity to set aside the notion of profit forever.

Hour-based currencies are a step in the right direction. At least they tie the medium of exchange to something universal and understandable to all people, namely increments of time or labor hours. In a book entitled "Take Back Your Life" I explore an even more radical alternative to our present monetary system and delve into many of these ideas in much greater detail. For a copy of the book send \$12.50 (\$9.95 plus \$2.55 for shipping) to: TBYL c/o Hope Publishing, 1286 Waverley Cres., Kingston, ON, K7M 6J6.