

Fifty Ways to Reclaim the Commons

1. Dream Realistic Dreams
2. Recognize the Commons
3. Understand to Whom Resources Belong
- Commons:** 4. Treasure Natural Beauty as Commons.
5. Fight for Clean Air for All
6. Champion the Right to Clean Water
7. Defend the Maritime Commons
8. Regulate the Space Commons
9. Stand Up for Public Lands
10. Advance the Forest Commons
11. Preserve the Wildlife Commons
- Actions:** 12. Use Global Resources Properly
13. Become an Activist
14. Lobby for the Commons
15. Utilize the Internet
16. Urge the Use of Gambling Money on Political Action
17. Detect and Expose Deceptive Advertisements
18. Connect with Public interest Groups
19. Be Concerned about Global Warming
20. Advocate for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency
- Redistribution of Resources:**
21. Tithe the Military for Peacetime Development
22. Satisfy the Hungry and Thirsty
23. Arouse Concern about Inadequate Housing
24. Establish Universal Health Programs
25. Participate in Literacy Programs
26. Declare that Employment is a Right of All People
27. Compensate Those Who Give Care to the Home-Bound
28. Tax Fairly
29. Propose Micro-Loans
30. Promote Conservation Easements
31. Redistribute Wealth by Forgiving Debts
32. Liberate the Affluent
33. Treat Affluence as an Addiction
34. Reduce Over-Affluence and Improve Quality of Life
35. Encourage the Poor To Act
36. Discover the Answer in Radical Sharing
37. Practice Voluntary Simplicity and Service
- International Enforcement Procedures:**
38. Strengthen the United Nations
39. Guard Against Nuclear Proliferation
40. Support International Peace and Justice Efforts
41. Enforce Global Environmental Standards
42. Insist on the Free Movement of People
43. Speak up for Fair Trade Practices
- Popularize:** 44. Publicize the Condition of the Destitute
45. Create a Popular Message
46. Inspire the Forgotten through the Internet
47. Enlist the Churches
48. Preface Capitalism with the Word "Godless"
49. Look into Different Economic and Political Systems
50. Testify to a Credible Message

1. DREAM REALISTIC DREAMS

We are able to dream realistic dreams. Such a dream is that all people on this Earth are able to enjoy a quality of life where the basics (nutritious food, clean water, decent affordable housing, adequate health protection, education) are available. By all, we do not mean those in our local community only, or those in our state or nation. We mean all our brothers and sisters on this planet. Is this not the dream of at least one billion people who lack the basic amenities of life? Is the failure to have such a dream, an oversight that could condemn us due to our insensitive condition of affluence? Do we deny that the destitute exist as we remain isolated within the comfort zones of our surroundings? Do we excuse ourselves and say that the destitute's problems are for others who are more expert to handle? Or even worse, do we seek to escape from the cries of the poor through our creature comforts?

How vivid are the dreams of others who lack the basics of life: the infants who die from dysentery, which is so easily remedied; AIDS victims who need sufficient medication; little girls in Afghanistan who go to school in fear; and women in Darfur who can hardly venture from refugee camps? Simply put, the dream of peace and prosperity must be a universal dream shared by all of us and for all of us. This world is too small; the communications too rapid; the transportation too dependable; the technology too possible; the financial resources too abundant -- but not available for use. The problem is not the vision or sound of need, for the mass media allows all of us to see and hear. The problem is far deeper -- our unwillingness to see that we can do something about it.

In stark contrast a second dream appears; this goes back a century and a half to that bloody American Civil War. We find the president, Abraham Lincoln, late at night at his favorite hideaway in the telegraph office within the Executive Office Building. There he goes to await news from the battle front and to reflect. He is writing but uncharacteristically; he is rewriting and thinking, scratching, writing again and again. It is the draft for his creation -- the Emancipation Proclamation. His mind returns to his "House Divided" talks of a few years before when running for the Senate: we cannot have a nation that is half slave and half free. And he must now do something about it.

Back to today. Let's globalize the Lincolnian insight: we cannot have a stable world divided into haves and have-nots, a world of the super rich and the destitute who lack the basics of life. At the very heart of our Earth's illness is an absence of justice for all, and it disturbs us just as it ought. Would that we could light a fire under all! Let's focus on the root problem, our lack of will power. Within our dreamy mental recesses, a solution of liberation begins to emerge -- a cooperative endeavor of rich and poor. The dream involves a win/win situation in which all benefit by a higher quality of life, rich and poor alike. Is this possible?

2. RECOGNIZE THE COMMONS

Doom for the man who founds his palace on anything but integrity, his upstairs rooms on anything but honesty, who makes

his fellow man work for nothing, without paying him his wages, who says, "I will build myself an imposing palace with spacious rooms upstairs." (Jeremiah 22:13-14a)

The "commons" refers to the things of this Earth that belong to all of us and are to be used for our livelihood and for the achievement of the "common good." These things are not to be delineated by boundaries and regarded as the property of possessors with some sort of legal title or privilege. Commons are first those things, such as the air, space and oceans, which cannot be easily delineated. But in a more definitive manner commons may be applied to areas of land where all have a right to food, proper housing and other amenities of life. Here more friction arises, for ancient conflicts sprang up between the sedentary farmers and the mobile grazers of flocks, between the gatherers and those who decided that they held fixed estates, between the wealthy possessors and the dispossessed. But does not commons include all, especially the "commoner" most in need of basics?

Commons extends to other creatures: the flyways for birds, the seaways for whales and other maritime creatures. Commons is for all, and a sense of belonging or owning is culturally conditioned, having roots in the past and extending to descendants out into the future. At this point, one must admit that different cultures have had different understanding of the extent -- not the fact -- of commons. For some, the commons are the non-privately-held portion of the universe, which will be reduced in size as more and more have power to lay claims. But should individual greed restrict the commons? Some primitive tribes regard only a few personal articles as privately held and the rest are commons: meeting places, hunting areas, fishing waters, and on and on.

With agriculture came staking out private areas. Certain land or property became the sole domain of individuals or family units. Housing became more individualized and private space became one's own. With the exploration of the entire planet, land claims were made in the name of the monarch of a colonizing land. Monarchs retained privileges and thus gained hunting rights and title to taxes or land in exchange for furnishing collective security. Entitled private property occurred with the rise of a nation state with levels of privilege to the various holders.

While not all people recognize the commons as being so extensive, still many of us have good reasons why each portion is commons: natural and enhanced beauty; fresh air even beyond one's immediate surroundings; clean water for drinking; the vast oceans and seas; the cosmic space above and all around; the common lands that include public buildings, roads, and historic and cultural sites; forestlands and wilderness areas; wildlife both localized and mobile; and all global resources meant for the common good.

3. UNDERSTAND TO WHOM RESOURCES BELONG

To Yahweh belong Earth and all it holds, the world and all who live in it. (Psalm 24:1)

To whom do the vast wilderness, the deserts, the mountains, the seashores belong? Who should say that this belongs to me and that to you? Is it by brute force or some legal mechanism that

this is mine and that yours? Doesn't it all belong to God, and are we not mere stewards for a short period? Doesn't the wilderness belong to the brute with the most power? Doesn't belonging or ownership mean different things to different peoples or in different periods of history? Who owns the air? Those with smokestacks? The oceans? Those with warships? Uninhabited and frigid Antarctica? Can't we walk on or cross lands that our ancestors hunted and grazed without getting permission from those with legal titles?

Our American tradition of land ownership has a long and varied history. Our borrowed English law tradition is based on perceiving land as something we have an absolute right through legal title. The understanding by Native Americans and those of other cultures may be quite different. More may be held in common and more may be subject to the overriding regulation of a larger governmental body. Eugene Hargrove traces the American land attitudes to our legal and cultural Saxon heritage and then further back to the Teutonic concepts of land tenure.

This common heritage of humankind can be coopted by those who discover that they can use some legal mechanism to become the owner of land or certain things; they may obtain a proprietary right to the property or a license to perform certain acts of special stewardship. When a government is influenced by money interests, those wanting to profit from a new definition of "property" will find an opportunity to lay claim to more of the commons. This had an historic precedent in the 17th century when common grazing lands in England were enclosed and taken over by influential persons and groups.

From attitudes about doing what one wants with property come attitudes about enclosing the commons and having the power to pollute as one sees fit. Conservative "Wise use" groups seek to challenge the right of the government to regulate their private land use. They demand to be repaid for the lost opportunity to profit from the development of their land now declared to be environmentally restricted. For instance, a requirement not to build on fragile seacoast in South Carolina or Georgia means that the property values of the potential resort areas are affected, and this results in loss of property value and profits to developing interests. "Takings" implies a return to the owner of millions of dollars resulting from governmental regulations imposed on the so-called owners. This seems grossly unfair to the holders of the commons. And it most certainly is.

4. TREASURE NATURAL BEAUTY AS COMMONS

Natural beauty is the first aspect of the global commons to be considered because this is the most universally appreciated aspect of our common human experience. People of all educational and cultural backgrounds have something in common: they admire the natural beauty of an undisturbed or well managed landscape. This treasure is observed and appreciated in various ways, and experienced by many primitive people even more than by modern ones. Mountains, rivers, seashores, forests all have that charm and grace that only the hand of the Creator can give -- and scenes whether visited or observed virtually give us immense peace of soul. Often the natural beauty has been enhanced by human work

and ingenuity.

Landscape disturbance occurs in a variety of ways, sometimes out of selfishness and other times in the guise of giving employment to workers or extracting useful products. The devastation of clearcutting or mining a land for resources with no thought of meaningful reclamation is the very opposite of refreshment of soul; rather this causes immense disturbance to those observing it. However, some modern folks do not look for natural beauty and often ignore it. This insensitivity of the over-affluent borders on the dysfunctional, for permitting massive disorder to land is pathological. The pinnacle of this misunderstanding of landscape is when a developer builds a hilltop mansion so that the owner can observe untouched beauty whereas others who observe the total scenic view see the mansion as a disturbance -- which it really is.

What must we do given the current situation? Primitive scenes and undisturbed natural beauty are becoming less and less a reality so we should consider approaches besides attempting to halt future mass disturbance. The best solution we can hope for is reclamation of the devastated landscape through a host of remedial practices: remove billboards and advertisements that mar the landscape; halt clearcutting of forestlands and abide by better harvesting practices that conserve the natural beauty of existing forests; stop the extraction of coal in elevated landscapes and use immediate methods of reclaiming top soil in level surface mining areas in the West; curb scattered developments in undisturbed tracts of land and limit these to existing developments; take care that leasing of public lands occurs only after strict environmental assessment; and educate the public on the aesthetic and even economic value (tourist potential) of undisturbed lands.

In a society sated with consumer products and their deleterious effects, treasuring natural beauty is something that must be reemphasized. Providing experiences of nature would be a valuable long-term investment in our country. All young people should have an opportunity to visit and observe areas of natural beauty with a formal educational program on the flora and fauna so that they come to appreciate the immense natural beauty all around them. Essays, paintings, and projects dealing with such beauty should be encouraged.

5. FIGHT FOR CLEAN AIR FOR ALL

Being free means we can breathe, and that means clean air. Life could not exist without the oxygen that must repeatedly fill our lungs. We are not free if someone else coopts the air we have and fills it with stench and toxic pollutants. The quality of life soon evaporates and we are left gasping for breath. Air and life go together, and thus we are entitled to that most basic of the portions of the commons of which no one should deprive us.

Since the 1997 Kyoto Treaty many governments, though not the United States, have taken great strides to reduce global emissions of carbon dioxide in an effort to forestall or decrease the threat of dramatic climate change through global warming. Even before that treaty most nations found that industrial polluting of air is unacceptable, and a host of regulations have been enacted to clean

up polluted air. Most advanced industrial nations have made strides but even there much more needs to be done. Going from dirty air to moderately clean air is relatively easy compared to going from this moderate level to pristine fresh air such as was known for ions on this planet (except for periods of time after volcanoes or major catastrophes).

Kyoto Protocol goals are not being reached in many European countries because anticipated domestic measures have not proved sufficient to reach the expected targets. In fact, European cars were 12% cleaner in 2004 than in 1995. The problem is that the number of vehicles rose by 21% during that period; cars are heavier and more powerful; and cars go at rapid speeds on the continent. Furthermore aviation and maritime transportation were not covered by the Treaty goals, and these have proved to be major contributors to air pollution. The aviation pollution was noted in the United States due to the three aviation-free days immediately following 9-11 when all air transportation was halted.

Often people propose the trading of pollution points, that is a heavy polluter buys points from a light polluter or one that says it is engaged in a practice to reduce pollution. This practice is fraught with unproven claims, and the entire trading process can become a sham that allows the heavy pollution to continue though now covered by a certain legitimacy. Far better to demand that the powerplants spewing toxic emissions clean up their act through the latest technology even when the true environmental costs will have to be paid for by the ultimate consumer. Why must residents near powerplants be subjected to life-threatening pollutants so others can have cheap electricity?

Cleaning up the air (that most basic of commons) is a major way of reclaiming the commons. Fresh air is so cheap that anyone should be able to enjoy a deep breath. In parts of China where coal is being burnt in dirty powerplants, taking a deep breath is a risk to one's health. Pollution is getting worse in rapidly rising industrial nations -- and the people there have lost their commons even amid propaganda about progress.

6. CHAMPION THE RIGHT TO CLEAN WATER

Like clean air, clean water is a right of every person. We cannot survive without it, and ought not to have to purchase clean water -- for it belongs to all. Water fountains should not give way to price-tagged bottled water. The truth comes home: water is no longer regarded as accessible and is being privatized. But what is inconvenience for me becomes an insurmountable difficulty for poor farmers needing water for irrigation, urban slum dwellers in the exploding cities of the world that have no access to clean water, and people who see their majestic rivers dry up before they reach the ocean (e.g., the Indus, the Colorado, and the Rio Grande). Even the Jordan often reaches the Dead Sea only as a brackish streamlet. Fresh water that is accessible is becoming a valuable commodity and those eager for profits know it.

The right to water is an emerging problem area for many in the world, especially the urban poor. And currently over half the world's population lives in urban areas. Take Mexico City with its twenty million inhabitants, growing at the rate of one

thousand people a day. The city is beset by subsidence due to pumping out the water below the basin on which the city is built; the rivers of waste must be processed before the water can be returned to human consumption; people throughout the vast slums must purchase small quantities of good water or "steal" (not really) from existing water supplies.

Funds for water distribution infrastructure are in short supply and so many city, state, and national governments involved turn increasingly to private funding sources. But is privatization the real option worth focusing upon? Lexington, Kentucky has been fighting this battle; so did the nation of Bolivia a few years ago; so do increasing numbers of large and small communities throughout the world. Some admit that privatization is at the crossroads and can only succeed with political and financial support. What does that mean? The International Policy Network in London, which pushed privatization, admitted recently that ownership by the private sector has worked badly in many places though many groups advocate more of that approach. Is this because the public sector has done a poor job in water access and quality?

Recife in Brazil and Bogota in Columbia have recently persuaded the World Bank to loan money for public service expansion -- something unheard of a few years back because of the bias in favor of private utility services. The battle is certainly not over, and some countries like Nigeria are pushing for private water development schemes. The 21st is the century when poverty is defined not only by access to jobs, but by access to water.

Water purification schemes are effective but sometimes costly. Desalination plants can operate using solar energy. Though the process may seem slow, still the larger the plants the more water is available. In areas near large bodies of water, this is one of the 21st century solutions to water shortage in many parts of the world.

7. DEFEND THE MARITIME COMMONS

Oceans and major seas are a vast commons belonging to all of us and comprising four-fifths of this planet's surface. In times past people thought they could not harm this vast expanse of water; today with our technologies we know we can harm this precious heritage. Coral reefs are endangered in many parts of the world. In recent years we have heard of rising ocean temperatures and sea levels due to the melting of ice caps. If Greenland's icecap goes in the next few decades, this could raise ocean levels some seven meters and flood Bangladesh and many island nations in the Pacific.

The oceans are the last Earthly economic frontier. Immense resources of minerals, natural gas and oil lie on or under the vast ocean floor, and only a small amount has been explored and far less exploited. While the fish stock of the oceans has always been immense, this too has been threatened since the advent of large factory ships, which scoop out all sorts of maritime life without regard to replenishment rates. In the battles over the "Law of the Seas" in the early 1980s, it was the United States that led the fight to keep out international laws governing the oceans. Much of this opposition was motivated by business interests that did not want international bodies controlling the

maritime commons.

More is known about water pollution threats that abound from numerous oil tankers that cause catastrophic harm when ruptured. Due to potential exploitation and dangers from pollution, an international voice must be raised, the global community through the United Nations has a primary voice in protecting these potential resources.

A transportation and fishing fee could be affixed to larger fishing operations, ocean freighters and passenger liners, and fishing people and to the exploitation of fuel and other natural resources. Certainly, collected fees should not be apportioned according to seaports or miles of coastline, lest the revenue accrue heavily to the larger maritime nations and the land-locked nations of the Earth be overlooked. Some of the other possible uses of revenues from these ocean/sea licenses include the following:

- * an international tsunami detection system that would cover all the oceans and seas and allow rapid detection of earthquakes and notification of vulnerable coastal regions so as to handle episodes such as the December, 2004, tsunami that killed 200,000 people;

- * support of research on ocean temperatures and the gulf current to obtain a better picture of global warming and climate change;

- * the establishment of a multi-national police force on the high seas to regulate the practices of seafaring vehicles; and

- * the institution of a licensing system for exploration and development of ocean mineral, energy and seaweed cultivation (for feeding the hungry).

8. REGULATE THE SPACE COMMONS

The vast cosmos stretches infinitely beyond us and yet the atmosphere that envelops our planet is fragile and can be damaged by human activities. International efforts need to be made to keep that space from being militarized by superpowers or polluted by misuse of certain chemicals.

- * We are well aware that the depletion of the ozone layer by the use of certain Freons and other chemicals has worried atmospheric scientists in the later part of the 20th century. Through internationally accepted protocols the manufacture of certain refrigerants and other compounds has been banned and this has reduced the ozone depletion threat.

- * International communications satellites are now quite frequently placed in strategic places in space and have become a key to the rapid exchange of information throughout the world. International enforcement of spatial use and fee-collection to assist with regulation should come under the United Nations.

- * International space laboratories have become a major venture and should continue.

- * The recent shooting down of a spent space satellite by the Chinese (US and Russia have carried out comparable exploits before) has resulted in more space junk that could damage future

space use and travel.

* Atmospheric scientific research using satellites and other information sources is quite necessary for the fuller understanding of climatic changes and threats to our environment.

* Scientific space probes, telescopes, space laboratories and international space programs are extremely expensive, and the cost should be borne on a cooperative basis by the wealthier industrialized nations. However, some research and exploration should be undertaken as an investment in the future -- though it should be well regulated so that financial resources are not wasted. For the greater part scientific research should stay down-to-Earth.

* Severe limitations on private recreational space travel programs ought to be established, for why should public funds be used for the exotic pleasure of the super-rich? Occasionally hard-pressed exploratory space programs are tempted to take these "spacey" tourists at high travel fees -- but many seem forgetful that it is the general taxpayer who has made space exploration possible.

9. STAND UP FOR PUBLIC LANDS

Public lands comprise almost one-quarter of the United States and consist of national, state, county and city parks plus wilderness areas, forest lands, military bases, airfields, prisons, highways, cemeteries, historic monuments, public educational and technical institutions, and courthouses. Some want public lands privatized as though they would be better managed if run by a corporation divorced from the government. This desire extends to public parks, prisons and municipal water works -- even highways. How this improves the situation is explained by propaganda that deliberately denigrates public management with little mention of the motivation of profit and control. And often these facilities are run by mercilessly cutting regulatory corners -- at least this is the opinion of this essayist with his dislike of libertarianism.

The defense of the public lands involves preserving them for future generations. Some of these areas are really the heritage of all people and so should have a global dimension. While shrines should still be maintained and maintained by the religious groups affiliated with them, access should be available to the public.

* **Seashores** should not be the domain of private individuals but be open and policed by governmental agencies. Why should seashores be closed to the general public?

* **Fragile wilderness lands** should not be allowed to be damaged or exploited and should remain within the public trust without being leased to mineral and fuel extracting groups. Much of Alaska should fit into this category.

* **Cultural sites** -- Global heritage areas should include such recognized cultural and architectural wonders as the pyramids in Egypt or the Sistine Chapel. The upkeep of these unique treasures should be the responsibility of the global community of people. Religious sites that could be internationalized include the Temple Mount in Jerusalem or Saint Sophia in Istanbul. Good luck!

* **Fragile lands** -- Antarctica is the frigid continent that people of the planet have become aware of for a little over two centuries. This unique continent is an international zone and recognized commons. To date, this cooperative recognition has worked quite well for nations within relatively close proximity (South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Chile and Argentina) and those with broader scientific research interests (United States, United Kingdom, Russia, etc.). The continent is demilitarized and has no major economic resources that trigger immediate exploitation. However, increasing tourist interest is resulting in the trashing of frequented areas.

* **Key straits and canals** -- Gibraltar, the Suez Canal, the Panama Canal and other such key waterways should be under international control though the nation nearest to them should have major stewardship responsibilities.

10. ADVANCE THE FOREST COMMONS

The forests are the lungs of the Earth. What would this planet do without forests? And yet in the last half century they have been cut down at an unprecedented rate -- though this has slowed somewhat in the last decade. The cutting and clearing away of these forests is a serious blow to the vitality of this Earth.

While individuals and corporations regard themselves as owners of particular tracts, they should not have absolute rights to choice of harvesting methods. Since the health of the planet and its people depends on forests, this becomes a commons issue -- and, if not the ownership, at least the use of the forests is subject to the consensus of the people who want this Earth to remain vital.

* Curb the cutting of rain forests. The tropical forests, both for cooling effects and due to the wide diversity of biotic life in these areas, are of critical importance. Cutting them for timber resources or for grazing and croplands should be halted, as should turning them into palm and other plantations for the insatiable appetite of wealthy biofuels users. International controls could include funds for protecting sensitive tracts of forestlands as well as assistance to resident indigenous tribes.

* Outlaw the sale of wood products that are obtained in an unsustainable harvesting fashion.

* Condemn poor forest practices. Reforestation is occurring, mostly in temperate areas where severe deforestation has occurred in the past. The curbing should be extended so that more land is returned to forest than is removed in all the affected nations. This should be achieved through tree planting that could muster the participation of a wide variety of citizens. A point should be reached where a tree will be planted for every tree cut.

* Promote urban reforestation as a means of cutting cooling

costs in summer. This is another area of extreme concern, though here commons would involve fewer areas but include thoroughfares and parklands. All cities should be covered by trees to the degree possible with a goal of fifty percent coverage for all less dense urban areas.

* Initiate tree planting programs that are able to include a range in age of the participants. Integrate this into teaching projects for youth. Strive to get them to know native species, how they thrive, their usefulness, and the overall benefits of trees to the total environment. Encourage essays, poems, videotapes and ceremonies that are directed to preserving and enhancing forest growth.

* Ensure that national, state and local forests are used primarily for recreation and not as a source of extracting timber and other non-timber forest products except under strict guidelines.

11. PRESERVE THE WILDLIFE COMMONS

This is why the country is in mourning, and all who live in it pine away, even the wild animals and the birds of heaven; the fish of the sea themselves are perishing. (Hosea 4:3)

Wildlife mourn through natural and human causes, the latter can be alleviated through a global willingness to do so. Primitive people have lived with migration of herds of Arctic wildlife for centuries. Inhabitants have admired birds of every type for millennia and yet we exterminated the passenger pigeon. Cod was so plentiful that our fishing ancestors could simply dip them out of massive North Atlantic schools. In addition to educational efforts to teach the history of species and current threats to them, protection measures should include:

* **Defending migration routes** and feeding and nesting space. Even hunting and fishing need some international regulations as occur with prohibition on specific types of whales.

* **Protect all species** from endangerment or extinction by a complete ban and severe regulatory sanctions on the sale or trading in animal parts such as ivory and tiger parts. The *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (CITES) was drawn up in 1973 to protect wildlife against over-exploitation and to prevent international trade in threatened species. Governments must dissuade poachers of both animals and plants. A carrot-approach has involved paying residents in areas of endangered wildlife habitats to police and protect the target threatened species. The North American whooping crane has come from near total destruction to a healthy current population of about 240. Frog populations require special attention because of dramatic declines in a number of American states, and biologists are baffled as to the cause. The Monarch butterfly has a limited area of winter quarters, and these parts of Mexico are now being affected by development; genetically engineered plants are reported to affect these butterflies during the milkweed growing cycle.

* **Exotic and invasive non-native plant** and animal trade should be so regulated that exotic and invasive plants are not marketed in lawn, gardening and pet outlets. Better game control would curb the problem of excess game animals (deer, geese, turkeys, rabbits). Encourage harvesting of over-stocked local wildlife populations such as the American white-tailed deer. If you are a meat eater, consume local organic food including meat from overly abundant wildlife herds and flocks.

* **Endangered species** could be nurtured through public and private funding and zoological garden fees. For instance, support centers such as that of Chinese Wolong Nature Preserve where the threatened panda bear-like creatures are being bred and raised in sufficient numbers for ultimate release. This is best achieved by protecting natural habitats (in Sichuan Province where pandas dropped to a low of 1,200 is now seeing increasing numbers).

12. USE GLOBAL RESOURCES PROPERLY

The Earth has vast but finite resources. If limitation is not based on known resources, limits should rest on the financial means needed to extract, process and properly use the resources at this time. A moral limitation should include saving some of the more easily accessible resources for the legitimate needs of future generations and restraining those who are powerful and affluent from wanton wasteful practices. They have no right to waste. Unfortunately, the striving to imitate the affluent causes others to follow wasteful consumer practices as well.

Conservation is key to reclamation of the commons. If redistribution of resources is to occur, then the privilege of some using so much and others so little can no longer be tolerated. To "tolerate" waste is to misuse the meaning of tolerance. The privileged have no right to waste. What then becomes important is that all avoid wanton wastes, not just the poor or the mass of middle-income consumers, but everyone. Just as all have certain rights to live from the commons, so all must have the responsibility to preserve and conserve that commons for the sake of future generations. And such conservation is to opt for a higher quality of life. We cannot buy from another the privilege of wasting. It is not a question of who is able to pay for carbon credits or some other concocted way of extending privilege. All must live within reasonable limits and should be made to do so -- and resource conservation is the rationale for such regulations.

Living simply is often demanded by circumstances and it may be part of one's free choice. Freely undertaken, this is a countercultural movement. It speaks out in opposition to crass materialism and the desire for big homes, cars, boats, etc. and calls the public to listen and follow -- and most often the public does. For those who can see through the weaknesses of the materialistic culture in which we live, simple living is a good model for improving quality of life. But simplification cannot be fully achieved through voluntary efforts no matter how noble they are (see #37). Global justice demands simplicity, and the establishing of justice is not a free option but a moral necessity that falls on all of us. The privileged have no right to continue to waste, for it is not their materials that they are wasting; they are stealing from future generations, which they are often

too selfish to care about.

Quality of life is enhanced through conservation mandated by a series of balanced regulations. A measured simplicity that goes beyond basic elements to include reasonable entertainment and enjoyment is truly needed at grassroots levels where culture resides, neighbors are known, travel is limited, gardens tended, homes can be smaller and cozy, and life can be lived in simple ways. The local ideals are always met with less use of resources; this allows the ones practicing simplicity to use locally derived sources of food, water and building materials. Carrying resources to distant places is resource extravagant.

-- Immediate Political Actions --

13. RESOLVE TO PUT DREAMS INTO ACTIONS

Dreams are necessary but not sufficient in themselves. We must awake from the restful sleep reinvigorated to carry on with what is before us. The truth found in the dream that all can share the basics of life can become a reality if we all work together to bring this about. But can we make a practical success with the immediate resources at hand?

First, success can come but we must be convinced that our actions do count, even though they may be small when considered apart from others. We must unite with like-minded people and gain strength from the enhanced power of numbers working together with a shared spiritual goal. Then we can achieve what is impossible when acting alone.

Second, a shared belief in the future gives the needed enthusiasm. Many religious traditions inspire people to look forward to eternal life; they teach that more exists beyond this troubled world whether in continuity with this planet or in a more non-earthly spiritual condition. A basic belief in the future is what makes us part of the People of God -- a community that draws from the wellsprings of a variety of traditions but includes basic shared values.

Third, one must not negate the past but sense the continuity with what went on before and know that the detours and defeats add to our experience about how to act now. We need to own history and see it as a source of what we can still do in the future. The present moment is the result of our historic roots; to forget from where we come is to be misled about our abilities to move forward.

Within our study of history we discover the commons as belonging to all and not to some self-chosen few and we know that the long story of liberating the commoners needs to continue through our efforts.

Activating ourselves means we will read meaningful materials, hear the voices of prudence and wisdom, reflect upon what has been said, and make these thoughts our own. This means we are willing to move beyond our locally directed actions and work as part of a social community in solidarity with other concerned people for the common good of all. Some immediate actions include the following:

Lobby for the Commons

Utilize the Internet
Urge the Use of Gambling Money on Political Action
Detect and Expose Deceptive Advertisements
Connect with Public Interest Group
Confront Global Warming
Advocate for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency
and insist on actualizing these measures in one's
own life.

14. LOBBY FOR THE COMMONS

Lobbying, or the free association with legislators by non-elected interest groups, is heavily skewed in the direction of special wealth. This fact makes the word "lobby" somewhat pejorative. However, lobbying may be for the public interest or the commons. By imitating the success of special interests in obtaining legislation, some public interest groups (civil rights, human rights, welfare, environment, consumer and others) have decided to devote time and energy to lobbying. These often low-financed but highly motivated groups see that achieving fair legislation requires some lobbying effort. They see that there is no one out there who will stand up and say, "I am the commons." We become advocates for the voiceless, for the commons cannot speak.

Enlist citizens who have a deep sense of social justice and are willing to take the time to lobby for a good cause. Work of this type is certainly quite salutary for it becomes a form of educating legislators and their quite powerful aides as to the need to redistribute wealth. Thus citizen education programs coupled with advocacy and lobbying efforts become one more effective way to bring about radical change.

15. UTILIZE THE INTERNET

The Internet is a new and rapid means of communication. The basic technology is quite complex but the free access allows for vast numbers of people to utilize this at very low cost (price of receiving computer and connecting fees). The poor can spread the Good News provided the Internet remains in the commons and is not taken over by private corporations. People can now communicate with interested parties in distant lands using far fewer resources than when they used the postal services. The printed media require printing presses at the generating end and a sophisticated means of advertising and dissemination to attract readers on the receiving end. Today search engines can find topics of special interest with ease and allow searchers to discover what is being generated worldwide with far less effort. Thus specialty publications can flourish over the Internet.

Website publication requires proper preparation of materials, critical design work, editing and placement on the website, and ability to attract viewers through search engines. Expanding audience may come through pertinent content but it can be enhanced through other options: annual funding drives; paid subscriptions; advertisements that relate to the content; blogging sites for interactive or conversational-style presentations; sales of materials presented; and connections with related sites. The Internet's rapid communication can be the window to the world, much as is the popular cell phone. The Internet may actually accelerate an antagonism against the privileged. The way is now

open to hear what others say and see how they live, thus accelerating a mobility that only makes those suffering from economic difficulties strive to escape their environment.

16. URGE THE USE OF GAMBLING MONEY ON POLITICAL ACTION

One of the greatest conspiracies of the current economic system is that one can become rich like a rare but highly publicized Grand Lotto winner somewhere in this vast land, who just won millions. The winner seems so ordinary and so much like you and me. Maybe that could be one of us. Little do I realize that the chances of being struck by lightning are greater than of being that grand Lotto winner. So each week after receiving the pay check, my unwise and day-dreaming breadwinner friends peel off five, ten and twenty dollars on the next round of gambling -- and a meager portion of that money goes to state education, fees and taxes, and the rest to the gambling bosses.

Deception reigns supreme. Why can't people realize this, except that they live in a world of semi-fiction? And one of these fictions is that one can be rich at almost no effort. Fiction looms bigger than reality and dreams crowd out the harshness of ordinary honest work. But gambling is not the only seasoning that can give meaning to life, even though it has been wildly popular and leads to a perverse form of addiction that can ruin even the most wealthy.

Gambling dehumanizes and makes one the ward of the state, complacent in not realizing that life is a far more serious gamble, some of the odds of which could be changed by human planned actions. Gambling makes the capitalist unrealistic dream of wealth stay in the mind and crowds out resourcefulness and utilization of limited resources. Shouldn't gambling in all its forms be taxed all the more severely? One problem with this is that the lower income folks suffer most from this regressive tax, for many in these ranks are governed by a craving for quick wealth. The tax burden falls heavily on those who can least afford to spend their money in this fashion.

How about returning to the realistic dreams that we experience? Take a chance that we could develop a more responsive political system and channel efforts in the direction of political action. Put time and resources into changing the system so that wealth is not redistributed from many poor people to one lucky individual who suddenly gets rich; invest time and energy and even money into changes through which all have the basics of life and are willing to help others overcome their particular rat race.

The result involves turning gambling excitement into choosing winners who will work to change the system for the better. Instead of constant loses on bets, a change could allow for a win/win situation wherein the public benefits with better basics of life, education and health care. Chance and risk take on new meaning; the political climate may not improve -- but with effort on our part it just might. In fact, with continued interest and donation of time and resources, a deeper and more public-interest sense of satisfaction could grow -- and gambling will be looked upon in all its sinister reality as something to be avoided.

17. DETECT AND EXPOSE DECEPTIVE ADVERTISEMENTS

Trouble is coming to the man who grossly exploits others for the sake of his House, to fix his nest on high and so evade the hand of misfortune. (Habakkuk 2:9)

Reclaiming the commons through individual processes is highly suspect in America's terrorist-prone post 9-11 days. We are to follow lock-step in this world lest we be regarded as outside the system -- but that is precisely what we are called to be. One of these individual actions is to heap ridicule on the enticements that lead us to heavy doses of the addictive disease called "affluenza," or the consumer malady that distracts us from the important things in life.

Create anti-commercial games. What we advocate here involves the ingenuity of individuals but within a social context, thus drawing from both individual creativity and social support and reinforcement. Make a critical evaluation of advertisements the basis for the game and publicly interact with other players to see who has the best anti-commercial. The creativity is a group undertaking to pan the advertisements that occur regularly in the mass media. Many of these have been known to create mass hysteria and impulse buying of items and services that are marginal at best and of no major benefit to the consumer. Give special attention to the horrors of advertising of medicine, the real cause of our drug-fixed world. When a really creative and insightful anti-commercial has been composed, make sure it gets on the Internet for others to see and appreciate. Your counter message now has a global audience.

18. CONNECT WITH PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS

Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first but everybody thinks of other people's interests instead. (Philippians 2:4)

Building a public interest spirit as through the previous game could go a long way. Entering creative thought on the Internet is the cheapest and easiest way to globalize ideas, even counter commercials -- and there are allies out there. By turning the tables on commerce you do not remain silent like traditional groups who do not want to be labeled as radical or arouse antagonism from potential benefactors. For them, John the Baptist would not get far today. They would remonstrate by saying, "Are you crazy? You need donations at all cost, so hone the message so it is pleasant and acceptable. Financial success is a sign of God's favor."

Public interest groups struggle over certain issues and deserve our encouragement, alliance and creative input. Become friends, because all that they often perceive is antagonism from moneyed interests. Discover who they are, make contacts, solicit their aid in areas of their expertise, and invite them to help reclaim the commons in so many ways. Make them see the universality of many public interest efforts working together.

19. BE CONCERNED ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING

Earth is good, is given for the use of all people, and is not reserved only for those with the greatest power to control the

commons in their own self interest. Today, we suffer much from those who seek to take part of the commons and use it in order to accrue profits for themselves at the expense of fresh air and water, wildlife, wilderness, and all natural resources. In a calloused manner in which resources and especially fossil fuel have been used in the past century, Earth has become enveloped with sufficient additional carbon dioxide to change the climate. We must acknowledge what is occurring and then help initiate steps to remedy the situation. However, people need a sense of justified anger and concern for the threatened planet on which we reside. If enough of us had this concern and resulting anger for those who are the chief exploiters, the world would be a better place.

Today, the gift of prophetic witness is present not only in a few select people but within entire communities, that is, concerned people striving for justice and reenforcing each other through mutual support. We live with paradox but let us not so much, as individuals, unwrap and reveal the message. Rather let us discover the need to listen and to direct attention to political leaders. The responsible scientific community says that the present condition of our Earth is leading to global warming. Prudence tells us that the voices showing the emerging fact of global warming through excess carbon dioxide and air pollutants need to be heard, and counter measures taken. We know that these conditions did not result from good deeds but through the greed and avarice of the powerful and wealthy. Concurrent with these warnings are offers from arch-conservative groups of \$10,000 prizes to any scientist who helps refute the recent UN global warming report.

What moves us to listen to some and not to others? Discordant noises draw attention and yet have little content and are soon forgotten. Some speak in a whisper and are drowned out by the noise of the barroom. Others sound good but get no where because the message has no depth. Still others speak to fertile ground (those attuned to listen with prudence). The gift of listening is at the heart of finding what is being said to all of us. Little gets done without listening. If we are moved through prayer and by the good Spirit, we will hear the authentic voices.

A few questions are worth asking: is the Earth really at a crisis, the ice caps melting, the weather getting hotter over a long term, hurricanes becoming more severe, and even the ocean currents changing? If that is possibly true, then we must speak.

Americans are known to have little concern about global warming problems whereas in other countries the matters are taken seriously. Why? Various reasons are given. The leaders of our country are not yet convinced that to confront this issue head on demands a radical change in our way of operating, a change in our very political and economic structures, and a reclaiming of the commons now captured by exploiters.

20. ADVOCATE FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Renewable energy sources (solar, wind, hydropower, geothermal, tidal, and some biofuels) are far superior from an ecological standpoint to non-renewable petroleum, coal, natural gas, and nuclear power. The commons question become evident when seeing the difference between the non-renewable and the renewable

energy impact on our Earth. One pollutes; the other does not. Certainly, it takes capital to create systems for renewable wind generation (wind farms) as well as for coal-burning powerplants. Some of these renewable energy sources may be utilized on a local and individual level and yet be tied into the entire energy grid through net metering programs; thus the individual energy consumers are able both to withdraw from and furnish electricity to the grid. These intertied systems can be established as part of cooperatives, private corporations or governmental operations. The commons of course is affected by the degree of benefit or harm to the energy consumers taken as individuals or as communities.

Of major importance to this discussion is the environmental harm done by non-renewable energy utilization such as pollution of air, water or land through extraction, processing, conversion to electricity, combustion, or disposal of waste materials. These affect the commons in ways already mentioned and replacing such methods with renewable energy sources creates a vast difference. Thus reclamation occurs in replacement of non-renewable sources with renewable ones.

The controversy over global warming that is now emerging as a stark reality makes this form of reclaiming the commons extremely important. Temperatures of air and water rise, ocean currents change and sea levels are elevated, climates are modified, biotic life is affected, low-lying lands and island states are inundated. The effect of global warming arising ultimately from burning petroleum, natural gas and coal are a challenge to the human race and affect the commons to a massive degree. This, along with the next suggestion of energy efficiency, are the answers and must be put into effect as soon as possible.

Energy efficiency is absolutely necessary, especially among the more-energy-squandering, affluent portion of the populations of so-called "developed" nations. Such measures as energy efficiency standards for automobiles, the use of compact fluorescent lighting, insulation, construction of smaller living and commercial units, and reduced air travel would all be possible in a rather short time. Such easily actualized reductions in the use of non-renewable energy sources would result in less pollution and thus in the ultimate reclaiming of the commons in ways already mentioned.

One must realize that the convenience of inefficient users of energy is really the robbing of the commons needed by future generations, by individuals and group who have little concern about others and only think of their own self-satisfaction. Conservation of energy promotes a sense of concern for others and for their own common good.

21. TITHE THE MILITARY FOR PEACETIME DEVELOPMENT

The president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, has suggested an annual reduction of military budgets by one percent in favor of a United Nations fund for the maintenance and strengthening of peace on the planet (*Economist*, December 16, 2006, p. 81). The proposal is quite modest considering the almost one trillion dollars spent each year for military weaponry and defense. Certainly, some of this must be shuttled to the United Nations for its peacemaking operations. But could there also be

military reductions that would challenge the prestige and privilege of standing national armies?

Military expenditures of one trillion dollars when people starve and live in dire conditions are sinful. Creativity is called forth to sustain a smaller military and get the same work done, quite often through diplomacy and non-military means. If a tithe of one-tenth of the world's trillion-dollar annual military budget were to be placed each year in a world development fund for feeding the hungry, furnishing clean water for all, providing adequate housing, developing educational programs especially in literacy, and giving basic health services, one could expect that the world would be a far more peaceful place. The Iraq War is costing America hundreds of billions of dollars. What could be done in non-armaments with such a sum of billions of dollars? If the money were not immediately spent but rather invested, the result would be still additional amounts. All of this could increase security by benefitting the poor in clean water, food production, and other basic services:

Food and water (\$30 billion/year) -- Food could be provided for the people in most need at times of drought or other misfortunes and furnished with ease through modern communications (tell the need) and transportation (deliver goods where needed).

Housing (\$30 billion/year) -- Tens of millions living in refugee camps, urban shanties, or completely homeless aspire to the luxury of a safe place that keeps out the rain and provides adequate room to sleep and live in relative comfort -- four 250-square foot rooms and basic utilities.

Health care (\$30 billion/year) -- Basic care is attainable using limited funds in the hardest stressed regions of Earth. With this military money reverted to health and after the solving of dysentery through clean water, resources to treat malaria and the AIDS pandemic, and basic inoculation can be achieved.

Education (\$10 billion/year) -- With this money a global effort could be launched for every mentally capable person on the face of the Earth to become literate in ten years. This could be achieved while at the same time paying a modest income to the ones who are teaching the illiterate people.

22. SATISFY THE HUNGRY AND THIRSTY

Dividing the tithed money would mean that the hungry and thirsty could receive an additional 0.3 trillion dollars over a ten year period. While actual food supplies for charity could be met by current funding sources, the money here would safeguard the distribution of food and water and allow for more of it being provided from local sources to the benefit of local farmers. Bulk supplies should come from the local commons where possible, not from distant places and thus reduce transportation costs. Here are some longer term investments:

Storage places should be located at strategic points throughout the world, especially in drought-prone areas such as

the Horn of Africa. Here food staples could be stored for immediate dissemination when and where needed. Within this age of fast communications (to receive notification of hunger conditions) and fast transportation (to alleviate the problem) rests the possibility of eliminating conditions of starvation and great need.

All weather farm roads allow local produce to get to population centers within the region or country at a reasonable cost to both producers and consumers.

Agricultural reform in poorer countries involves dividing large estates into farming cooperatives or individual farms for landless people and helping through grants or loans to assist in start up costs (tools, seeds, livestock, etc.). Additional resources may be required for health centers and schools, for the onus of community building should not be left only to homesteaders.

Food and ration cards that are personalized to avoid theft or illegal transfer could allow a more just distribution of commodities to lower-income people throughout the world.

Home gardening by large numbers of urban, town and village residents could result in more nutritious, locally-grown food. Providing seeds and gardening equipment would allow the grower a closer affinity with Earth, healthy exercise, respect for nutritious food and growing methods, and a better use of yards, unused estate grounds and vacant lots in many places.

Clean water systems could be provided. Increasing the number of water purification systems, cisterns, water wells, and desalination systems could give clean water in ten years to every man, woman and child in the world. The dream of potable water is deep in the psyche of many people who now suffer from dysentery and other water-borne diseases.

Agricultural systems could be improved. With adequate funding, water containment reservoirs, additional irrigation infrastructure, solar water pumps, and desalination projects could be established using native local labor and services.

23. AROUSE CONCERN ABOUT INADEQUATE HOUSING

Basic housing could be provided for one-tenth of the world's people (150 million dwellings) who lack it at this time, if these resources are freed for the commons.

Americans may laugh in a land where medium-sized homes are now built for a quarter of a million dollars. How could one make much difference by allotting two thousand dollars for each dwelling? An answer is that the housing site is assumed to have been already established. Labor would be supplied by the residents and extended family and use of local exchange labor. Thus the money would be spent principally for basic construction materials. Second, the basic building material for the most part would be the local stone, wood, or clay (pressed earth, cob, adobe, brick, etc.) and the purchased materials would for the most

part be the foundational concrete, cement, window glass and roofing. Third, internal year-round space heating units are omitted from the estimate due to the majority of the homes being built in tropical areas of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania. Fourth, an interior or exterior compost toilet could be locally built and would not require an expensive sewer system. Fifth, the basic water supply could come from a safe cistern built at the site. Last of all, a small solar energy device tied into the utility network could allow for electricity for basic lighting.

24. ESTABLISH UNIVERSAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

Basic health is a right of all people on the face of our Earth. To ensure this right seems to be beyond the resources of Earth's economies, but is this really the case? One does not have to expect total access to the latest health-related technologies and still the saving on human life throughout the world could be immense at an expense of \$30 billion per year. This could include:

- * **The World Health Organization** could expand inoculation programs to cover every child in the world for all major vaccines as well as adults susceptible to certain regional diseases. This includes generic medicines for AIDS victims along with programs to help prevent AIDS in hard-hit parts of Earth.

- * **Basic clinics and health services** for all parts of the so-called underdeveloped areas need to be constructed and provided with equipment and refrigeration units for storing medicines. Part of the funds should be used to train primary health providers who could dispense certain medicines and vaccinate people. Assistance for doctors and nurses to work in poverty areas could be given:

- * **Simple solutions** for dysentery and malaria could be easily provided. A simple plan to halt the killing by malaria of two million African children a year would cost \$10 per family. This money would provide bed nets to needy families along with tips to prevent malaria (at a total cost of three billion dollars). Reference -- "The \$10 Solution, *Time*, January 15, 2007.

25. PARTICIPATE IN LITERACY PROGRAMS

The commons includes access to common knowledge either through basic formal schools for youth or adult training programs.

We all have the right to gain knowledge and that means to have access through literacy to current resources that include the written word. It is only fitting that all who have the mental capacity to learn should have at least a basic understanding of the written word so that each reader may make judgments as to his or her civic duties. Once we say that all should participate in reclaiming the commons, it follows that all need the ability to use the resources at hand -- including all the wealth of written reflections and information. Written literature is essentially available to all and most often in their own native language.

Basic literacy. To actualize the right to literacy requires a massive effort on the part of all of us, for many of our fellow citizens are handicapped by lacking the ability to read. And

through embarrassment they often cover this up in subtle ways. Here is an opportunity to give assistance that could be compensated, even when efforts do not occur in a formal educational setting. Literacy means liberation, a freeing of a person to venture into the vistas of the massive libraries of materials that have been collected. A whole new world opens for the illiterate -- a commons of all people that can be gained through a transferral that is radical sharing. We must be eager to help raise the level of all people to where they can truly carry out their civic duties of voting in a thoughtful manner.

Geographic literacy. Many people in both so-called developed and underdeveloped nations have a gross ignorance of geography as well as of economic conditions. This can be partly alleviated through study programs, educational films and tools available today -- even a trusty classroom globe. Young and old should know the continents, nations, land and sea bodies, and habits of people in distant lands. While actual travel is helpful but costly, virtual travel through educational materials in schools and libraries, over the Internet and on educational tv can open doors.

Social literacy. In this age of globalization, everyone from kindergarten through old age should learn about the basic needs of people in various parts of the globe. Often this is not a photogenic or beautiful site, for many wince at observing sewage drains beside tin shacks, kids playing in infested areas, the emaciated faces of the malnourished, and the sounds of the whimpers and cries of the poor. Virtual travel (through audio and videotapes) can allow all of us to observe without the infringement on personal privacy. Gradually with effort we can achieve a needed social consciousness.

Globish-English. One form of commons that was lost at Babel could be returned through establishing a Lingua-franca. The English-speaking world could help provide this through materials and services, for two billion people already speak basic English.

26. DECLARE THAT EMPLOYMENT IS A RIGHT OF ALL PEOPLE

A system that is built on a pool of the unemployed is simply unjust, for no one should be subjected to longer-term unemployment, especially when citizens desire to work and make their own livelihood. The right to work comes with citizenship. The basic right to earn a livelihood is guaranteed by the governments and ultimately by the United Nations. Some may say, "Work opportunities do not exist." Instead, the work is available but the financial resources to pay for the work are not forthcoming. To make this basic right operative requires a radical readjustment of the economic system, a redistribution of the wealth of this world. Why should a privileged few receive high salaries when others do not have enough to live on? Governments are the employer of last resort, a philosophy behind the Great Depression's Works Progress Administration (WPA) -- and this is still a valid principle.

Unemployment varies considerably from country to country. In some nations the un- or underemployment reaches unusually high rates of two-thirds of all workers. Many underdeveloped nations find it increasingly difficult to create jobs fast enough to meet

their rapidly swelling labor force. Due to automation, the labor force in many sectors (e.g. coal mining, agriculture, and railroading) is in decline and makes the employment picture all the more challenging. The hopelessness found among long-term unemployed workers, leads to family and community discord, substance abuse, and acts of violence. A society that says that the workers even when willing are unneeded is lying.

Discovering and promoting meaningful work positions are duties of the government -- the ultimate employer. No one can deny that much has to be done in this troubled world. There is far more work to be done than people to do it. Matching work opportunities with workers becomes a challenge. Here the taxes on the wealthy could be directly shunted to open up fulfilling work opportunities for the unemployed -- a direct reclamation of the common arena of work.

Unfortunately people fail to dream of full world employment and rather think it expedient to spend enormous sums on anti-terrorism measures, partly demanded by the growing discontent among the unemployed. Where are the problem areas -- in our insecurity and need for more military defense, or in addressing deeper causes of social unrest? The following are job opportunity areas:

- * Support for small food producers;
- * Provision of potable water systems for all;
- * Design and construction of adequate housing;
- * Support for public health and sanitation facilities;
- * Construction and maintenance of schools;
- * Construction of recreational facilities and other infrastructure such as transportation and communications;
- * Environmental protection education, promotion of renewable energy programs, and reforestation projects;
- * Care for the elderly, infirm and orphans.

27. COMPENSATE THOSE WHO GIVE CARE TO THE HOME-BOUND

While this area is listed last in the work opportunities that require compensation, still it is the one that would utilize more people than any other - literally tens of millions -- and still provide a livelihood at the lowest cost per person. The focus of attention here is on the unheralded people who take care of the elderly, the disabled, orphans and other dependents. We speak mostly of women who spend a fair portion of their time at home giving much attention to these less fortunate relatives. Those who need constant care consume the dedication and attention of at least one out of every twenty people on the face of our Earth. We are talking about over three hundred million caregivers. This figure is not invented; in most cases caregiving becomes a full time occupation and also saves society by not institutionalizing the people being cared for, which would cost far more than would be required here.

Too often the commons demands that some take care of those who can no longer care for themselves. A bond of love and responsibility motivates those who take care of the invalid or elderly who require assisted living or total care. Ireland is one country that gives compensation for caring for the elderly at home. In recent times when people worked at external occupations, the more able-bodied became unavailable to assist those who were dependent within the extended family. Thus the rise of senior

citizen facilities for even those who are given only assisted living. The willingness on the part of loved ones to sacrifice for those in need is not a reason to exclude them from the "commons" of tax benefits.

Many social welfare systems in the developed world give some or total compensation for assisted living and totally dependent care living conditions. These can amount to tens of thousands of dollars a year per person and can be paid for either from existing estates of the individual or from the social welfare funds of the state. When people are able to live at home under compensated caregiving they feel far less institutionalized and the compensation stays local. Furthermore there is no need for the caregiver to have to seek a non-domestic occupation.

28. TAX FAIRLY: ESTATE TAXES AND CARBON TAXES

One of the most successful recent propaganda campaigns has spread the message that raising taxes is bad and cutting taxes better. As a result of this recipe, the poor pay more than their fair share through a host of sometimes hidden sales taxes, auto taxes, entertainment taxes, liquor taxes, employment taxes, city, state and federal taxes, and on and on. Yes, the wealthy pay a smaller portion of their income than the poor. Some corporations pay no taxes because of complex write-offs, deductions and perks. Thus the campaign to lower taxes for the benefit of all becomes a gigantic fiction that benefits the wealthy the most. Pressure groups prod the entire electorate of all economic levels to support cutting taxes across the board -- and thus stripping the government of resources needed to perform its tasks. Unfortunately, the specter of wasted governmental funds is inserted as a reason for fewer taxes and less government. However, the answer is not less taxes but more efficient government.

Taxes on the rich with little or no taxes on the poor would be the most non-violent redistribution scheme to reclaim the commons. Is there any evidence that extravagant incomes mean better service for the common good? A living wage is one thing; an excessive salary with perks running into the millions of dollars is another. An income that exceeds basic needs is to be severely examined in order to be justified in a sea of human need. People can be motivated by love of the professional work, recognition of success, relationships with others, and non-monetary considerations -- they don't need excessive salaries. Higher salaried executives or professional athletes should have normal ceilings, say \$100,000. They may be given salaries

beyond this amount for the sake of their egos, but the excess should then be taxed away for the good of all.

Estate taxes are a special category. In some cases farmers are land rich (of monetary value if sold) but money poor. To place heavy estate taxes on those making a living off the land is highly unfair. The same may be said for those with small businesses. To tax would be to destroy a livelihood, and that is not the purpose of taxation looked at as a retribution mechanism.

Carbon taxes on the excessive emissions of carbon dioxide that are a major contributor to global warming are making the user bear the environmental costs of damage done. Those who consume the carbonaceous fuel should pay the costs of cleanup -- and be encouraged to move to non-renewable sources of energy. The poor who burn wood to heat meals should be encouraged to obtain solar ovens.

Tax havens develop in weaker nation states. Today, globalization involves rapid movement of money from one country to another allowing individuals to seek tax shelters in lax countries. The money flight is augmented by rapid communication and transfers of wealth with little transparency and oversight.

29. PROPOSE MICRO LOANS

The practice of giving micro-loans to lower income people is part of a campaign to extend business funds for start-up of independent enterprises. This should benefit people who would not otherwise be able to break their bonds of indebtedness -- a form of slavery. These micro-loans are not so much a concession to the current world economic order as a way to liberate those enslaved by overwhelming indebtedness. To fail to spread the financial resources is to allow the current concentration of money in the hands of large banking operations, along with oppressive financial conditions.

The periodic freeing of all people (see #31) from debt will most likely disrupt this financial system if performed too suddenly. Micro loans are a far more moderate proposal and have been found to work in Bangladesh and other nations. Micro-loans allow the small home industry (purchase of basic materials and equipment) to proceed without extortion caused by money lenders.

30. PROMOTE CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Another concession to current economic conditions is promoting land conservation and restraint from the pressures of land development. The present holders of the land could come to a voluntary agreement with a non-profit organization or government agency according to which the property owners limit the activities that can take place on the property. Easements are recorded with the deed for the property and are perpetual and thus bind all future owners to honor non-development of the property. Property owners retain title to their land, they can sell it when they wish to do so, and they do not have to give up any rights that they wish to keep.

Easements may carry financial benefits for the property owners. If the donor gives the easement or sells it for less

than fair market value to the public agency or private organization, the difference between fair market value of the property before granting the easement and fair market value afterwards can represent a charitable contribution. Furthermore, local annual property taxes may be reduced, because the easement means that the value of the land has dropped due to giving up development rights. These easements may pertain to preserving land for outdoor recreation, education, protection of wildlife habitats, or other forms of public benefit.

The recipient of the conservation easement is responsible for monitoring the easement to see that whoever manages the land adheres to the terms of the easement, and, if the easement is not being honored, for bringing the owners into compliance, if necessary by going to court. Administering easements requires a lasting commitment of time and money on the part of the agency or organization and can become a way of sharing the commons with the larger community of people.

31. REDISTRIBUTE WEALTH BY FORGIVING DEBTS

You will declare the fiftieth year sacred and proclaim the liberation of all the inhabitants of the land. (Leviticus 25:10)

A sabbatical is called every seven years and a sabbath of sabbaths on the fiftieth year -- a year of Jubilee. Some biblical scholars say that the system, though quite explicit in Scripture, has never been fully put into effect. Isn't it about time for a systematic redistribution of wealth in our world? Every half century is a very good time for such an event. Redistribution is something that should occur once in the average lifetime of an indebted person.

The easiest manner to effect this redistribution is through the forgiveness of debts by financial interests. Many of the governments of the world have accumulated debts, often through unwise or even corrupt dealings on the part of the leaders in a nation, or due to wars and other catastrophes within the region. In whatever way these debts occurred, the reality is that some countries have crushing debts. The interest alone is enough to cripple basic services including health and educational programs of the particular indebted country.

On the day this was written China forgave \$15 million of Liberia's external debt, which was a gracious gesture by a newly rich country. But the African country has a 3 billion dollar debt, and so the gesture was perhaps one or two months interest on the national debt. What we fail to grasp is that the indebtedness amounts to major portions of the GNP of some nations. Nicaragua has an external debt of 4.054 billion dollars (2005); it has become a prime candidate for debt forgiveness, which is now beginning to occur among some of the poorest nations of the world. Haiti with 80% of the people below the poverty level had an external debt of 1.3 billion but is hoping to see much of this forgiven.

In recent years the World Bank and wealthier nations have taken some first steps to relieve the very poorest nations, with no ability ever to repay (and only the likelihood of getting still deeper in debt), of this indebtedness. But if this

forgiveness covers the first twenty nations, what about the twenty-first? Will that unlucky nations now sink into still deeper despair? A gradation level could be established among the lower two-thirds, forgiving all of the poorest and proportional parts of the others according to ranking. Truly it is difficult to determine what is totally fair but some efforts toward better adjustment could be made after proper petition. The argument that forgiveness of all debts would lead to chaos may not be totally valid. The current indebtedness is chaotic enough as it is -- it is just not borne by the wealthy. And what is at stake here is reclaiming the commons.

-- Personal Liberation --

32. LIBERATE THE AFFLUENT

Affluent people are caught in the web of their own delusions and need liberation and salvation. One must never give up hope; thus attention must be focused on the liberation of the wealthy as well as to that of the poorer folks. First, by liberating the affluent we help give them salvation and most certainly a better quality of life. Second, through this liberation the privileged class is abolished, for wealthy become co-equal partners in the world around us. Third, through the liberation of the wealthy the world of all becomes better, and the insecurity caused by the destitution of a billion people is eliminated.

While the ideal process is for the affluent to surrender their high lifestyle freely, often this affluence blinds them into insensitivity and inactivity. One answer is that outside agents of change must be the ones who challenge the affluent to give up their lifestyle; the agents are to trigger changes that will bring this about. Direct educational programs for the addicts have not proven to be an easy way to go, but they can be part of the treatment mix. And the overly affluent are addicts. Certainly the agents of change must challenge the hypocrisy of those who attend to partial measures and never address the depths of their own materialism. So often, people with plenty become aware of the need to share, but they retain so much that penetrating the depths of affluence seems an impossibility -- harder than getting a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.

Countering the argument that affluence is a general goal of all people is the fact that it is a vice that must be addressed.

This more direct approach may result in a dramatic challenging of the affluent's personal practices. For instance, some women still wear furs but the pressure is upon the wearers to regard this as out-of-fashion because of opposition from animal rights groups. The same has occurred in wearing a bird feather in a male or female hat as was done as part of fashion a century ago - - and resulted in the loss of millions of songbirds. Furthermore, the use of energy-hoggish vehicles is becoming unfashionable as the price of fuel rises. But to transfer these individual changes to an entire way of life may be a far bigger challenge.

A commitment to liberate the affluent must be taken in a spirit of non-violence, for violent means never really work in bringing about authentic social justice (see *Daily Reflections*, "Choose Non-violence in Place of Violence," 3/8/07). Note the

liberation process of both Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King. We can only liberate others by being willing to break away from what binds us (see *Daily Reflections*, "Be Willing to Sacrifice," 3/17/07) in order to achieve something better. We must be willing to abandon the old and latch on to something new. If the current social order is damaged by insensitivity on the part of the affluent, then sacrifice, not violent revolution, is needed to make it whole again.

33. TREAT AFFLUENCE AS AN ADDICTION

Regarding affluence or "Affluenza" as a disease or malady is the beginning of a reform in our way of living, both interior and exterior. For further improvement we need to enlist the resources of those who are members of Alcoholics Anonymous and others who have conquered substance abuse, in order to assist in bringing about change on the part of the affluent (see *Daily Reflections*, "Challenge All to Change," 2/21/07). Television and other forms of commercialism have produced an immense propaganda machine that reaches into virtually every home and to every individual. Most people have been highly influenced by the allurements of materialism, and this makes it all the more difficult to recognize the addictions that we all possess, much less to do anything about them.

Oliver James, a British psychologist, has written a book, *Affluenza*, showing that an epidemic of mindless consumerism is sweeping the world. He has chronicled how depression has enveloped affluent people, and he documents the fact that mental illness is especially prevalent in English-speaking countries, far more so than even on continental Europe and many times more than in less so-called developed lands.

A limited sharing of resources even in the form of massive gifts given by multi-billionaires may not be the perfect approach. In recent times these gifts have turned out to be the largest monetary gifts ever given, but then never before have people accumulated such wealth -- and been free to give so much. Liberation means first reexamining the power and concentration of wealth and then seeing that this is deeply unsettling and that the tolerated materialism is corrosive of a democracy.

True prophesy overcomes this road to self-satisfaction and demands change; liberation requires personal freedom from the corruption of affluence. Change agents must restore the self-confidence of those smothered in affluence. Elected representatives of our democratic government must initiate oversight procedures into the corrosive influence of affluence and propose and enact legislation that regulates the excessive use of the world's limited resources by a few. Amazingly, the arguments and procedures are similar to those voiced in the eighteenth century against absolute and often despotic monarchs.

The destitution in our world today is a form of slavery (see *Daily Reflections*, "Globalizing Lincoln's Insight," 2/12/07). We cannot have a healthy world of haves and have-nots. Massive wealth creates a basic insecurity that damages the community fabric of our world. Conscientious citizens acting in a non-violent and participative manner can help liberate the affluent from what they cannot see. Over-affluence is a disease, often

something that has been caught. The individual must share blame with an entire dysfunctional social system. And the sick must be treated kindly.

34. REDUCE OVER-AFFLUENCE AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE

Over-affluence is not something that will trickle down to the less affluent by some sort of largesse on the part of the haves. The addictiveness of affluence affects the persons involved, and the maintenance of this lifestyle requires extra attention and effort on the part of the one living it. Over-affluence requires more of the world's limited resources to heat, cool and maintain the domestic space. The travel and entertainment of the affluent strain world resources.

In short order, the affluence becomes all consuming and results in a growing insensitivity that creates a wall that prevents genuine change from occurring from within. Excessive wealth is undemocratic (*Daily Reflections*, 3/5/07) for it is accumulated at the fastest speed ever recorded in human history and outside the pale of democratic process. Those with wealth have more voice than those without who essentially are becoming disenfranchised. The traditional democratic process is strained when it should be constantly nurtured through patience and human interaction.

On the other hand all too often the "have-nots" of the world are tricked into thinking that the more they strive to be like the affluent the better their chances of having more. Some of the more perceptive people see through the shell game and become totally disillusioned and turned off by the affluent society. These malcontents are ripe picking for terrorism. "If we cannot have, neither can anyone else." Communities are fractured and become destabilized and their security threatened by this growing discontent. Green zones and gated communities are required to separate the haves from the have nots, thus perpetuating and targeting further discontent.

The only effective way to reduce affluence is through legislated regulations within the existing democratic processes. Such methods are non-violent and participative, two requirements for a proper redistribution. Through fair taxation, funds may be freed for necessary programs to rebuild the infrastructure of our society. The undemocratic procedures used by the wealthy to influence government must be exposed, halted, and countered through restrictions on the control and exercise of wealth-driven power. The process calls for oversight by citizens who stand outside of the prevailing culture to some degree.

Allowing over-affluence to continue is not tolerance for a few but intolerance for those who cry for their daily bread. Furthermore it disregards future generations who must live on the limited resources that are now being consumed through wasteful practices. Reduction of the affluents' waste may be achieved through education, exposure, ridicule and non-conformity to the system now in place in so-called developed countries. Does there exist a divine right of the billionaires? Or must the people take what is rightly theirs?

35. ENCOURAGE THE POOR TO ACT

Reclamation of the commons is not the duty of the addicted affluent only, nor is it completely dependent on the work of change agents, who live outside of the system to some degree. Rather, it involves an empowerment of those who need to overcome internal grievances that can paralyze and to become willing to move out in a rational manner to take charge (see *Daily Reflections*, "Help Empower Others," 2/27/07). A false humility must be addressed and a sense of empowerment established -- that is easier said than done. It involves knowing individual powerlessness that can be remedied through a sense of solidarity that begins with the need for divine assistance. Yes, "my" gives way to "our," and our resources are limited without divine help. Herein is discovered a new-found spiritual empowerment known to those who are ex-addicts in the AA programs.

This sense of empowerment grows slowly at first and then more openly as a sense of power in the public interest grows with time. Pride passes through false humility to a true humility of knowing both limits and a power existing in community using all resources at its disposal. The goal cannot be reached alone; it involves us all and that includes external empowering agents who act as catalysts to the process. Now true change may occur for we have the enthusiasm needed to overcome the desolation that can weigh us down (see *Daily Reflections*, "National Desolation," 2/19/07). But this desolation is directly related to the pervasive affluence that is imprisoned in the twin evils of convenience and continual material gain.

We must take what is rightfully ours (see *Daily Reflections*, "Take What is Rightly Ours," 3/29/07). As long as the matter does not devolve into individual selfish grasping, the action becomes a social stance emphasizing "we." During the dark days of post-World War II Germany, Cardinal Frings of Cologne told his people that taking coal to heat homes was not stealing when it was absolutely needed. This principle extends to similar circumstances today. Take from the excess surplus and not from others who seek to meet basic needs as well. The surplus belongs to all of us, not to the few with some sort of legal title.

Waiting in patience is hardly virtuous if others around us starve -- and we can do something about it and with some possibility of success. Forbearance may be needed in times of persecution or oppression or when massive disability hinders action; the able-bodied must act if it is at all possible. To take what is rightly ours is basically an initiative. We help empower the seemingly powerless. Unless we give them hope the condition of destitution/slavery continues. Extreme poverty should never be regarded as permanent, for it is fundamentally a condition that destabilizes the world around us. If we accept this condition as permanent, we succumb to despair and loss of soul. Thus we must act in solidarity with the poor.

36. DISCOVER THE ANSWER IN RADICAL SHARING

The ideal movement occurs when the rich see the needs of the poor to such a degree that they give, and the others gratefully receive through a grand act of sharing (see *Daily Reflections*, "Radical Sharing is Necessary," 3/29/07). However, that seldom happens spontaneously or even after we act as catalysts to trigger sharing through encouragement of the wealthy.

A salient but gentle sense of dignity is involved when the taker reclaims the commons by initiating action that is restrained and not greedy. To wait for others to give radically (not just tokens) from their largesse is unrealistic given the reality of the addiction of affluence. Assisting the have-nots is part of what a religiously-based catalytic action is all about -- but it demands that the change agent radically share the poverty of the ones who needs to take. Thus the first step in radical sharing is that the change agent shares radical poverty and enters into the taking process. Thus in solidarity, through sharing, the external agent gives up his or her freedom and becomes a taker with others.

Radical sharing leads to liberation of people, both the holders of excess and those who lack the basics of life. Through sharing, we both liberate and are liberated. The initiator of the process, even if an individual, enters so much into the radical sharing that he or she can truly say "we" as initiator of the radical process. "We" testify that an external force -- the Holy Spirit -- initiates all sharing, because at the beginning God shares with us. We only testify to the process that God has started and we are mere witnesses. Inspiration comes from the Holy Spirit who starts us all on the road to sharing.

Religious-based intentional communities down through the ages have shared everything in common, from apostolic communities to Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker movement. What was done on the local level needs now to be globalized. We are to share the resources of the world with all people, and the emphasis is on fair sharing not on legitimized hoarding or grabbing. Not only is fair sharing more perfect, but it is good religious practice that can reveal examples in virtually every faith tradition.

The liberating message of radical sharing is directed to both those who have excess and those who lack. This leap of faith in the act of sharing is needed for the genuine development of the entire world -- not a materialistic development based on greed and self-interest. What is so necessary is to see that sharing is not the taking by another of what one unfairly regards as his or her absolute possessions, nor the forced giving up by the possessor. Radical sharing is the act of realizing that what one gives and another receives, when done freely, gently and non-violently on the part of all parties, binds the world more tightly together as one sharing people.

37. PRACTICE VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY AND SERVICE

Instead of measuring achievements in dollars and cents, socially conscious people see that satisfaction can be achieved in non-monetary ways: volunteerism, charitable giving, renouncing wealth, and direct service for and with the poor. The long history of religious and professional commitments testifies to this satisfaction. A new sense of value emerges that is not dependent on how much one makes in monetary compensation but on the degree to which one gives from the heart. And furthermore, a new form of recognition occurs when the poor respond in gratitude.

Our society needs a non-monetary gradation of professional assistance that overturns the basic assumptions that compensating income should be allotted according to perceived skills and needs. This service approach does not decrease the quality of life, because one can certainly show that non-monetary compensation has a major part to play in authentic caregiving. Often people sacrifice income to do things they enjoy in the service of others; some heroically go to war-torn areas of the world to serve the poor. As long as the caregivers have some moderate livelihood they can pursue a life of attending to the needs of others.

Simplicity enhances solidarity. People who seek to go out and share with the average inhabitants of the world will find that this moment is welcomed by all people of good will. This radical sharing is a step towards solidarity, far superior to fighting for a lifestyle that is unsustainable and must be abandoned through pressure from governmental agencies, so that all may have some resources. While voluntary simplicity has the benefits just enunciated, but there are limitations:

* Voluntary simplicity is tolerated by the powerful elite with the expectation that over-affluence will be equally tolerated. This tit-for-tat is very misleading. While simplicity is a program for a sane world where limited resources must be shared by all, tolerance of over-extravagance is a recipe for global disaster.

* Voluntary simplicity captivates its practitioners and takes much energy and attention on their part. It borders on the stress for individual salvation and the rest be damned. It is the weakness of the homesteader mentality.

* Voluntary simplicity is locally focused and takes time, more time than often anticipated before hand. A stone thrown into a quiet pool has a ripple or replicating effect of a wider and wider wave of disturbance. The problem is that a stone thrown into a turbulent body of water has little effect -- and our culture is in violent agitation. Individual acts have an impact, but the pressure to do things quickly and efficiently makes a broader approach imperative at this time.

-- International Enforcement Procedures --

38. STRENGTHEN THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations (UN) is really the only internationally recognized network that is currently capable of reclaiming the commons. For the most part, virtually all nation states respect the existence of this global body and treat it seriously, something not accorded to the League of Nations in the post-World War One era. The UN has had some degree of success in the Balkans, parts of Africa, and other areas of conflict; it does have global services in agricultural development, health, arms control, justice, refugee services, and scores of other issues. Modest success has been possible. This clearly indicates that, if the superpower were to surrender some of its influence, the UN would be far more effective. Only then could a global commons be recognized and respected and actions reenforced through police mechanisms that have teeth.

The UN could become an ineffective and bloated bureaucracy. It draws ambitious, achieving people from a wide variety of nations all looking for positions of importance and many with ambitions to exit their own lands for the glamour of New York and Geneva. A person may come to the UN headquarters in New York for a modest job through the influence of the government of the native country -- and yet be far less qualified than another person from a country already over represented in the UN. This aspiring official can make far more money than possible in a higher titled post in his or her own country. To this person, a genuine advancement has occurred -- and yet the person may not be the best qualified -- and may fall into the false expectations of a bureaucracy and its seeming ability to achieve success.

The critical conditions of our world demand that the UN be given effective powers to carry on the tasks it must do by pure default and pressing global need. A confederation of states is no more able to give effective service today than it was at the advent of the United States in the late 18th century. In the course of these essays we have suggested that the UN should rise to the occasion and protect or sponsor the following:

- * Practices Preventing Global Warming
- * Universal Clean Water Systems
- * Maritime Commons (Law of the Seas, whaling treaties)
- * Space Commons (atmosphere & space programs)
- * Public Lands (Antarctica and fragile areas)
- * Forest Commons
- * Bird and Wildlife Migration and Nesting Areas
- * Internet Freedom (free access)
- * Literacy Programs
- * Universal Health Programs (World Health Organization)
- * International Police Force
- * International Criminal Court
- * International Atomic Energy Agency
- * Refugee Agencies and Migration Controls

39. GUARD AGAINST NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

We think we are privileged through knowledge and fortune to pick fruit from the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." To enter into the civilian nuclear energy club is a hidden temptation to proceed further into the more select nuclear weapons club. Aspiring nations with aggressive ambitions are sorely tempted to be the "gods and guardians" of the atom.

To vacillate on this nuclear choice issue spells disaster in the long run. People who perceive this impending disaster come from two directions: an anti-nuclear powerplant or safe energy position and a pacifist world peace position. Today the two stances cannot remain separated. We must unite our forces and call for removal of nuclear weapons from the global arsenal and for the removal of nuclear power plants from the global energy strategy. The only tolerated radioactive materials should be the relatively small amounts needed for radiology and other medical treatments -- and hopefully even these may be replaced by less harsh methods in the future.

Will we succeed in our goal to rid the world of nuclear materials? We must. There are really no two long-lasting

options, for we as a world community are currently playing with fire -- radioactive fire. The burden rests upon our collective shoulders: to rid the world of radioactive materials, to protect our fragile world, and to heal the wounds of our Earth. How did our country and others in the nuclear club become so arrogant as to think that they possess a certain grace to care for such unmanageable weaponry in a rational fashion, especially since its only use has been against civilians in Nagasaki and Hiroshima?

Nuclear abolition can and will occur, but it will not be through some miraculous means. Through a strengthened UN this could occur in a matter of a decade. Today, some who called themselves environmentalists have joined the nuclear energy club, but their defection should not hinder us. The best defense is an offense -- and we are here launching just such an offensive in conjunction with the vast numbers of people of good will in both movements. This is an ultimatum for ourselves -- a moral blueprint, a practical outline. We need all the support we can get on every front to extend this crusade to people of good will in every land. For this reason we address this message globally to all involved in promoting conservation and renewable energy and to all who work for peace. This is the critical hour; thus we advocate an across the board abolition of nuclear materials.

Is nuclear proliferation inevitable unless we bite the bullet and become totally nuclear-free, both militarily and with respect to nuclear power generation? Are others tempted to move from tolerating nuclear power plants to possessing nuclear weapons? If so, let us all phase out nuclear power and move towards energy efficiency and renewable energy sources that are environmentally benign and friendly.

40. SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND JUSTICE EFFORTS

The most glorious commons that is shared by all people is peace and security. So these should be given great attention.

Peacemaking should hold a high priority in our world for anytime a war can be averted and diplomacy succeeds a major victory occurs. Thus efforts at peacemaking should be of far higher priority and receive as much adequate resources as the military systems of so-called defense.

Security is also part of peacemaking and is something no one would want to be without. Security demands a police force that is of sufficient size, well trained, and capable of rapid deployment to areas of conflict especially when governments are unable to keep control of their lands. Such a United Nations police force or peace-keeping operations have been expanded in recent years. Such a force includes 17,000 blue-helmeted United Nations peace keepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as in many other places. With drug trafficking on a global scale the need for police is all the more imperative.

The International Criminal Court is an institution that can put teeth in the enforcement of justice at a global level. The United States still does not see fit fully to support such a system. It is necessary that international justice be handled by a system that goes beyond the national jurisdictions of the

independent states. In many ways accepting the status is a process that the United States initiated over two hundred years ago when it moved from the Articles of Confederation to a constitution with a national Supreme Court. We simply have too many global issues today that cannot be handled satisfactorily within individual nations.

Controls on giant corporations are needed at the global level. Corporations exist at the pleasure of the citizens, and they need to be instruments of liberation not tools of oppression used by CEOs for their own benefit. When these organizations do what they were incorporated to do, they assist in economic development, and yet in this age of globalization they can exert a subtle form of oppression on others. Chinese mining corporations in Zambia do not allow unionization and have sent agents to shoot protestors. They also do not regard the safety standards needed by workers. These institutions are incorporated by particular governments and required to be accountable.

If corporations become international in scope they should obey global regulations, meet standards for renewing incorporation documents, report earnings, pay taxes, obtain distinct identification numbers, establish communication with local authorities, and carry out the public trust in specific areas. In the evolution of our nation these agencies took on certain "rights" as though they were citizens; furthermore, they retained the financial power to influence governments.

41. ENFORCE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS

Countries differ in their environmental requirements in part due to lack of equal monitoring or enforcement procedures. In fact, with the advent of globalization a number of regulations need to be global in nature in order that all may share the commons together and for the sake of those who may have to endure deterioration of the environment and the resultant pollution. The following are some key areas of concern:

* **Anti-dumping requirements** -- Ships containing toxic materials must not be unloaded without proper notification, disposal site preparation and standard preliminary treatment. Several west African countries have been subject to the indignity of toxic waste dumping practices in recent years.

* **Indoor environmental standards** -- Some basic requirements as to the health and safety such as noise abatement, indoor and exterior air pollution, etc. must be established. Production of materials at lower costs due to lax environmental standards should be exposed and bans placed on such goods.

* **Trade in endangered and threatened species** -- See #10 FOR CITES obligations.

* **Extraction or pollution of water** -- Nations sharing water resources need to come to working agreements as to how this may be done in a just manner. Often, upstream users coopt the resources and take excessive amounts of water or damage downstream water through pollution practices.

* **Maritime shipping pollution** -- See #6.

* **Air travel** -- Airplanes cause considerable air pollution due to inefficiency in design and operation. International standards need to be set to reduce such pollution just as such standards are set on landing privileges.

* **Pesticide application** -- Controls on toxic residue limits on edible products needed to be expanded beyond the European Union and the so-called developed nations to cover all commerce in foodstuffs among nations.

* **Resource extraction** -- Standards for protection of the environment during the extraction of petroleum, coal, natural gas, and minerals as well as forest logging should be uniform among all commercial nations. The right to trade outside of a local nation's boundaries should depend on adherence to international environmental standards for extraction and processing procedures.

* **Global warming concerns** -- All nations need to enter into climate change agreements in order to limit greenhouse gases. This includes the United States, India and China.

42. INSIST ON THE FREE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE

You must not molest or oppress the stranger, for you were once foreigners yourselves in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 22:20)

The commons with reference to land means that all people have at least a remote attachment to other lands and thus we can all say to some degree, "This is my own, my Earthly abode." **Visitors** can expect to move freely from one part of the world to another to visit foreign places, see ancestral homes or relatives, or take pilgrimages to religious sites. **Laborers** seek to emigrate to work in places with greater economic opportunities, e.g., the migration of people from Latin America to North American and from Africa to Europe for economic opportunities as guest workers or permanent residents. **Refugees** need to escape conflict or persecution in their own native lands and seek temporary or permanent asylum elsewhere.

Neither a totally open- nor a totally closed-door policy is just. The open door is conditional to some degree and can require restrictions and requirements for incoming people. Neither total exclusivity nor inclusivity is proper, for some flexibility is required as a healthy mark of hospitality. We can learn from the poor (see *Daily Reflections*, 3/10/07), e.g., generosity, ultimate trust for basic provisions, making do with limited resources, sensitivity to the needs of others, and ultimate humility. These characteristics may be applied to migration.

43. SPEAK UP FOR FAIR TRADE PRACTICES

Free movement of goods involves social justice issues: richer countries granting subsidies to their own enterprises (e.g. U.S. cotton production and French agricultural subsidies) and thus giving these unfair advantages over poorer enterprises in less so-called developed regions. Most poorer areas do not

want unfair trade coupled with charitable donations. (See *Daily Reflections*, "Seek Justice More Than Charity," 3/13/07).

Normally local production of basics such as food (grains and vegetables) should be encouraged over specialization principally by larger agri-businesses in commodities (coffee and sugar) that can be exported to wealthy nations. In a more insidious manner, palm trees are replacing tropical forests in Malaysia so that palm oil can become a biofuel for fuel guzzlers in wealthier lands.

It is quite difficult for two economically unequal nations to deal fairly on a one-to-one basis. Invariably trade works to the advantage of the wealthier land and to the detriment of the so-called trading partner that is poor. On the other hand, a consortium of raw materials producers may be advantageous to weaker nations. All in all, the concept of "trading partners" looks quite different to the rich and the poor -- and this must be recognized in international trade negotiations.

-- Popularizing the Message --

44. PUBLICIZE THE CONDITION OF THE DESTITUTE

This is an unsettling and troublesome period in history and many find it very hard to face. They will be tempted to back away, to forget the current conditions through being drawn to other allurements, to leave the solution to those who are regarded as greater experts, or most likely to deny that such conditions exist. The unsettling results from the vast difference between those who have and are privileged to have and those who have not. This creates disharmony causing some to strike out.

The so-called war on terrorism results from those who feel their culture is being threatened. This holds that the terror is done by others and that the status quo is the best safeguard. Don't rock the boat or it will be swamped by the storm. But is this truly the case? The greatest terrorism facing a billion people on the face of our earth is hunger, fear of rape, health threats, lack of decent housing -- the ongoing terrorism experienced by the destitute. And then there are terrorists who strap on explosive belts and visit fruit markets and others who are insensitive to the plight of the poor. Are not the two percent who own half the world's wealth participating in terrorism?

The wealthy and affluent in North America and Europe and now spreading to selected parts of Asia, the Middle East and Latin America are demanding excessive resources for spacious housing, inefficient private means of transportation, and exotic forms of entertainment; these result in increased use of limited resources and subsequent pollution. The demands made by affluent people far exceed those made by poorer folks because the affluent do more pleasure travel, have far larger homes that take resources to heat, cool and maintain, make greater demands on health and educational facilities, and eat more resource-demanding foods.

Greater resource demands mean more pollution. Air travel results in increased air pollution and in contrail formation that reduces the amount of sunlight entering the atmosphere. Burning

fossil fuels leads to more carbon dioxide and subsequent global warming, a terror to peoples whose nations will be swamped and deluged by the rising of the seas. And who are the ones to blame? If we harm innocent wild animals, birds, fish and human beings due to our affluent ways, are we not as much perpetrators of terror as suicide bombers?

The truth is difficult to accept, making many more prone to escapism and fiction than to facing the reality of destitution head on. But truth can also make us free -- from the affluence that binds people in materialism's chains. So we must talk about it, write about it, discuss it. Through a more popularizing approach we may come to find that the picture is not black or white but has much gray within.

45. CREATE A POPULAR MESSAGE

The first American Revolution was widely supported, although at the time no rapid communication network existed. This was done through personal conversation and through the spread of pamphlets, talks, sermons, banners, church bells, and other media events and message patterns of that day. The equally important imperative of this 21st century is popularizing the need for profound political and economic change. Here are some ways that we can help bring this about:

- * Create and see to it that public service radio announcements are broadcast as part of the requirement for each radio station using the commercial air wave channels;

- * Develop clever bumper stickers to be attached to automobiles and other visible places;

- * Sponsor concerts and conferences with the theme of reclaiming the commons;

- * Write articles (popular and learned) and letters to the editor;

- * Connect this website to the other progressive groups throughout the world and spread the word by downloading the ways listed here. Make sure the copyright is attached, not for any mercenary reason, but to claim editorial control and responsibility for all that is said.

Each of us is called to be free with a freedom deep down within our bones. Here is the root cause of our realistic dreams, dreams both individually unique and a collective image. Working together to extend liberation must be popularized and catches the imagination of all the people. This is a daunting task, a global task that cannot be achieved by the stroke of a super-power's presidential pen, a dreadful civil war or violent revolution, some sort of financial compensation to the "owners" (thus giving them even more wealth). In our dreamy mental recesses a solution of liberation begins to emerge -- a cooperative endeavor of rich and poor. The dream involves a win/win solution in which all benefit by a higher quality of life, rich and poor alike. But we have a long way to go.

Unfortunately today utilities, communications and transportation systems are being privatized, but so are even the highways (the Pennsylvania Turnpike may follow the example of the Chicago Skyway and the Indiana Turnpike by being sold to foreign investors). Morris Island, a major Civil War battle site, along with many others, is now being turned over to private developers.

This movement must be understood, opposed, described and confronted. In time, our American forbearers gradually extended voting rights to those white males from much to little and finally no property, to the Blacks, to Native Americans, to women, and to those between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one. The gradual liberation still continues today. We need to extend citizen rights to the world's destitute -- and this is more than a national undertaking. It is global in nature and takes work.

46. INSPIRE THE FORGOTTEN THROUGH THE INTERNET

Should we focus on the most learned, the most connected, the most notable, and by inspiring them start a contagion that will engulf the world. That is not necessarily the way things happen in a world sated by commercial allurements. Rather, there may be another approach that will give hope to the lowly and start a groundswell that should spread in the world. Connect through the Internet. See *Daily Reflections*, "Inspire the Overlooked," (3/14/07).

Charismatic people including cult leaders and dictators could turn masses of people on for the wrong causes, and so merely arousing the people's emotions is not necessarily a lofty goal. Religious charismatics are often gifted at inciting people to rise, wave their arms and go into a fever pitch, whether for short revival periods or for longer spans of time. But what brings on genuine enthusiasm (the God within) with its balanced approach and staying power? This is the inspiration that takes root and can be seen in others and is worthy of imitation.

Those who are on fire with a wrong cause or direction are certainly hard or almost impossible to redirect without a miracle of grace. It is even more difficult if a tinge of hatred for others is involved. It is as though they are demonically possessed -- and removing the possession is a formidable task. For such excited souls it may be best not to attempt a frontal confrontation but to hope the right person enters their lives to help them in due time. Certainly, they should not be forgotten.

On the other end of the spectrum are those who are unmoved and need a spark of inflamed zeal so they can be roused. Again, we can only do so much. If the person responds generously, then the torch can now be passed on.

As Saint Luke says, "Yahweh has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly" (1:52). We get a clue from this passage that our attention must be on the often overlooked -- the lowly. Sometimes they await inspiration, and yet we have given too much attention to those who are well-known but over- or under-charged. Too often we limit the audience to movers and shakers or those we imagine to be. Sometimes the lowly in a broad sense are outside of our area of vision. Maybe the notable and affluent are not the change agents of tomorrow.

Maybe, just maybe, God wants us to see the divine preference through the modern byways of the Internet. Here we can find them in the hidden crevices using a global searching tool that allows us to come to them and them to us with great ease. Before it was hard to search out and then communicate over great distances and with immense time lapses. Through our websites we are now able to label our outreach more precisely and searchers may find each

other with greater ease and accuracy. If we give careful attention to making our message presentable, we will ultimately reach the lowly and be able to help them rise to high places.

47. ENLIST THE CHURCHES

Churches played some role in the first American revolution even though only about one-tenth of the people were enrolled in churches at that time. Today over half the people of our country participate in church activities at some level (see *Daily Reflections*, "The Problem of Acquiescence," (2/13/07)). The message that is placed here is not counter to but part of every religious foundation: give to the poor and make their lives better for them. Speak up for the poor even though it may be costly. Confront the rich and do so openly. *You are the ones who destroy the vineyard and conceal what you have stolen from the poor. By what right do you crush my people and grind the faces of the poor?* (Isaiah 14b-15a)

The churches can become instruments for social change if they can see the connection between the gospel and the daily lives not only of individuals in need of reform but also of communities of people. Looking more deeply at Isaiah's words we find that we need to break silence as believing communities and point out that the "you" is a plural group and not just individuals. Yes, the church must warn us that we as a people can be at fault when we fail to act; we can lose our souls through blatant insensitivity that is the fruit of over-affluence. Churches are ideal to do some of the following:

- * Incorporate a critique of affluence in the messages of sermons and homilies;

- * Include such materials in youth and adult educational programs and carry these out to other people;

- * Conduct retreats, workshops and conferences on social justice subjects;

- * Train church personnel to carry the message of social justice to others;

- * Create posters for the educational portions of the parish structure;

- * Conduct service projects especially for youth to assist others in other countries and sponsor people from those lands to come and help with service projects in the church's local areas;

- * Join in ecumenical statements and actions to stand for the redistribution of wealth and especially to forgive more of the debts of the world's poorer nations;

- * Confront corporations and their practices; and

- * Identify and assist the needy to become aware of their own situation and to undertake to do something about it.

48. PREFACE CAPITALISM WITH THE WORD "GODLESS"

While other "isms" may be prefaced with the word Godless, let's not overlook capitalism. Declaring a rose to be a rose is only elementary truth. So is declaring capitalism to be Godless. President Reagan expressed his type of piety by declaring the economic and political system of the Soviet Union to be Godless, and the rhetoric proved highly effective in ultimately bringing down that government. The same type of rhetoric could be quite helpful today since the current system with its systematized greed and exclusive privilege is certainly not "godly" in any sense of the term. The founders of capitalism had no idea how powerful this movement could become when globalized. A system of small entrepreneurial businessmen in small towns has grown into a global system of capital moving at will vast sums of money from one nation to nation.

The evangelism of Godless capitalism is quite pervasive, permeating everything from clothing design, to ipods, music, entertainment, movies, McMansions of all sorts and shapes, fast vehicles and fast foods. Advertising, the "good news" of this Godless capitalism, is the medium and the message. The Godless capitalist system has no respect for the forgotten small consumer who is barely within the commercial world, who tries to sell his or her products in a world of immense parking lots and block-sized mega-marts. Compassion and concern are not the landmarks of this now triumphant economic system -- and yet every effort must be made as part of the crusade among people of faith to question, strip this system of its power, and tear down the idol of money -- "In God (the dollar) we trust."

People feel an uneasiness even in the midst of comfort or when indulging with the substances that they use in excess. That uneasiness seems to subtract from the benefits sought among the creature comforts of our modern age. This inherent uneasiness is not readily admitted to but still exists as a form of restlessness quite likely inspired by the Good Spirit. Since godlessness abounds in our materialistic culture, God breaks through the fog and inspires us through a form of rectifying desolation. Discerning the spirit requires us to take a serious look at where we are going and to challenge the Godless capitalism that has reared its ugly head over us.

Often people feel bound by loyalties to groups to which they belong or work; they regard the economic system clothed in American patriotic symbols as wedded and not detachable. That is simply not the case. If we are truly patriotic and loyal to the founding principles of our fair land, we shall analyze, expose, denounce and replace the Godless system that requires unemployment, forgets about the disadvantaged, allows the super-wealthy to swelter in their affluence, and tolerate the explicit wasting of resources that belong to future generations. Reclaiming the commons means putting God back into our motto. Only in God, not a god, do we trust.

49. LOOK INTO DIFFERENT ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS

None of their members were ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from them to present it to the apostles; it was then distributed to any members who might be in need. (Acts 4: 34-35)

This "Fifty Ways" is not a political treatise but rather a

blueprint for action, one that opens possibilities to refined political development. While not involved in political policy as such, I see the need for concerned citizens to engage in responsible political action (letter-writing, conversing with elected officials, lobbying, voting, etc.). However, this does not seem sufficient at this time: we must begin to entertain ideas about radical political change because the current traditional political parties are not addressing the deeper issues of our nation and world. We must ask more searching questions about the Godless capitalistic system which has so captured our American economic and social system.

Alternative money systems have been proposed in recent years generally in association with college campuses and towns. However trading in local script from these alternative systems may go for buying locally grown fresh cut flowers or repairing bicycles, but what about paying for college education or health insurance or even a new car? These alternative money schemes seem artificial because they do not address the deeper financial concerns of people and only tinker with real issues.

Cooperative systems, which seem far more viable than the local script approach, have been proposed. They allow for the use of the money system but direct benefits to the producers without a host of middle people. Much work must be done to develop the systems and keep them operating. Our family belonged to two rural cooperatives (one a producing and one a marketing organization). Now one is in deep trouble as so often happens in agricultural cooperatives. Perhaps a national cooperative system could overcome the weaknesses of relatively small coops.

Traditional collectivist systems that flourished during the 20th century and still remain in certain countries have many good qualities but nevertheless still have inherent weaknesses that have led to their demise. In actuality, when these systems targeted means of production only, they were often overly centralized and suffered from lack of flexibility. However, when they did away with unemployment and looked out for the basic needs of all citizens, they had salutary goals worth retaining.

A moderate collective approach that meets the basic needs of all of the world's people, involves global regulations to control material and environmental excesses, encourages local production of goods and services, and distributes and conserves resource excesses according to needs and with respect to future generations, appears to be emerging as a viable economic system.

50. TESTIFY TO A CREDIBLE MESSAGE

People who gave up their independent possessions and ways of life to be of service to others and share out of love for others have always been highly regarded in our world -- and this service enhances the credibility of their message.

Some would say our credibility is always at stake. Well that is true to some degree, but only to some degree. The challengers of credibility must prove their case, and that can be difficult. When the people seeking to be credible are honest, motivated, plain spoken, public-spirited and willing to stand firm amid rejection, they are on the road to being believed. Maybe it is impossible for them to meet the criteria of an

incredulous audience. However, their message still deserves a hearing by the fair and open-minded.

Credibility depends equally on the deliverer and the receiver of the message. Credibility is not the same as veracity or the quality of truth about claims. Credibility deals with whether something is believable even though the facts or claims may be hard to understand and in some cases fictitious though hidden. Through propaganda and a hostile media those who must decide on the claims may be gullible or closed minded or they may be the opposite. They may doubt or believe depending on what they have heard though not thoroughly investigated. It may be that the reluctance to see the need for profound change is due to the prior conditioning of our people to believe blindly in the current economic and political system. For them, if migrants or the poor are regarded as being at fault, they hold social change for the migrants' betterment as suspect. If the same audience is convinced that the wealthy are virtuous and that the rich have been rewarded for their virtue, then credible arguments for change are held to be suspect.

Our ability to reclaim the commons, which has been taken from us, strains the limits of traditional credibility. First, is not this reclamation a daunting task that will take much courage and effort? Is the effort guaranteed to be fruitful? Even if done on a minor or local level, can this evolve into a global movement? Is reclaiming the commons merely a pious option or is this a necessity? If the process is put off, does this extend the power of the status quo and continue the destruction of our planet? Are there a committed few who will act as catalysts? Is not meaningful and successful action the ultimate test for credibility? Will it come about?

The challenge is more than a well reasoned and inspiring message that will touch the hearts of many. This challenge includes seeing all people as brothers and sisters, understanding their basic needs, and being willing to do something. Only then are we in a better position to recast, experiment, and refine our message so hearers are open to change. We must make the message credible through authentic action. The time to act is NOW.