

Relax and De-Identify Yourself

People often think and speak of themselves as if they were a fixed or single thing. How often have you heard someone describe another person by saying something like "he is a fool" or "she is wonderful". The truth is, however, that although our bodies may have certain measurable and relatively stable characteristics, who we are inside, or our personalities, are constantly changing. Our inner self is different in different settings and can vary in the same setting under different circumstances.

Each one of us is really a complex series of energy relationships with our environment. Our senses are stimulated by the energy forces around us and our conscious mind works incessantly to interpret the information that the senses collect. To think of ourselves as something detached and distinct from our environment is as meaningless as trying to imagine the wind without referring to any other objects that it influences. We only know that the wind is there when it exerts a force on some other object that we can see or feel. If there were never any objects directly in its path (including our own bodies) we would never be aware of its existence. We only know of its existence because its *relationship* with other things reveals it and gives its existence meaning. What we *become* when it blows through our hair on a hot muggy summer day (ie. refreshed and happy) is quite different than what we become when it stings our face on a bitterly cold winter day (ie. uncomfortable and miserable).

People are not fixed chemical compounds. Our physical chemistry is constantly changing in response to what we eat, breathe and do. Likewise, the electrical chemistry of our emotions, consciousness and even our self-awareness is comprised of a series of interrelationships with our environment. Life is a by-product of these chemical combinations, and self, is the experience of these electrical combinations. To try and separate self from the combinations themselves is futile. To search for the one, true "YOU" is just as meaningless, and most of our self-identity is just self-delusion. What you "are" is related to the conditions and the environment that surrounds you. We can't control what we become under a certain set of circumstances any more than we can control what our hair becomes when the wind races through it.

The popular notion of an "ideal" personality is simply a scam. Everyone alive has the same positive and negative emotional tendencies and experiences. We all experience situations in which we perform brilliantly and situations that we are uncomfortable in. We all have "good days" and "bad days". Inventing an artificial, ideal personality or lifestyle however is very useful if you want to make people feel inadequate or incomplete so that you can induce them, with dreams and illusions, to buy your products. In the real world, the secret is to find the right environment that brings out a "YOU" that you like, most of the time.

What Can You Do About Pollution

The good news is that you *can* do something to reduce air pollution. A poll in January 1996 showed that 64% of Canadians believe that their health is affected by pollution. Only 49% thought so in 1989. Air pollution, much of it caused by smog, adds an extra \$1 billion dollars each year to Canada's health costs, according to federal estimates. Smog is the common name for ground level ozone. It is created when heat and sunshine mix with automobile tail-pipe emissions, industrial smoke stack belches and other chemicals.

Environment Canada determined that a test car driven for 100 kilometers at a steady 80 km/hr caused 18% less pollution than the same car driven at 100 km/hr over the same distance. Reducing the speed from 80 to 60 km/hr saves another 12% of the pollution.

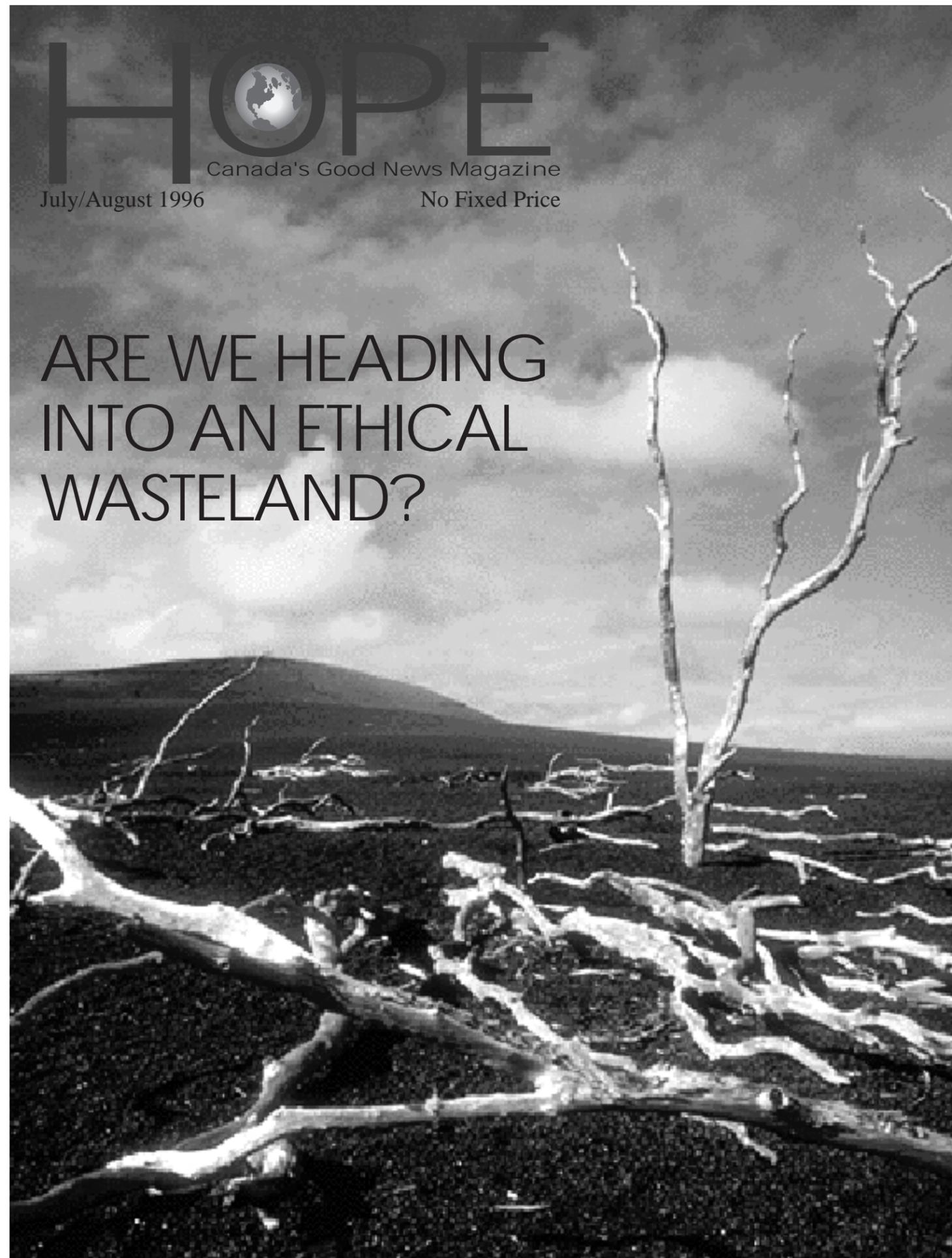
What I am doing and what you can do is *use the car less*, use more public transport, car-pool with a friend or neighbour and *walk where possible*. But if I or you have to drive, *drive more slowly*, say between 60 and 80 km/hr on a highway with a 100 km/hr speed limit. Equally important, *tell your friends and neighbours what you are doing and why and ask them to do the same*. Phone your MPP and MP and write to your local newspaper. It's no use feeling sorry for our children's and grandchildren's polluted future. Let us take action, first individually, then collectively.

Hubert Stehr,
Burlington ON

HOPE is published six times a year by Don Findlay, an independent researcher living in Kingston. Recognizing the need to demonstrate new, more cooperative ways of doing things led to the decision not to charge a fixed price for this magazine. HOPE now relies entirely on the wisdom and generosity of its readers for its survival. HOPE *trusts* you, the reader, to judge the value of this publication for yourself. If you feel that it makes an important contribution to society and you wish to help it to continue and grow, then please send a donation to the address below. If you wish to sponsor the printing of additional copies of HOPE, its current short-run printing costs are about \$30 per 100. If you ask for it, a credit in your name will be printed in the run that you sponsor. All of the time and labor that is expended in producing HOPE is volunteered.

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A Workfare Alternative

If David Tsubouchi really wants to give people on welfare a “hand-up” he should scrap his workfare plans and try stimulating real job creation. By transferring a portion of his social assistance budget directly to any businesses or organizations that are prepared to hire welfare recipients, he could help create productive minimum-wage jobs instead of just more dead-end dependency. Recipients would get a real job and earn a pay cheque like everyone else, while the lower cost of labour would help Canadian businesses compete internationally. Such a system would not only restore the privacy and dignity of the recipients, but it would save taxpayers money too.

Currently the minimum wage in Ontario is \$6.85 an hour. For a part-time position of 24 hours per week, the provincial government could offer to pay the first 16 hours of wages, to any organization which agreed to pay the remaining 8 hours and all of the normal employment benefits. For a full-time position of 40 hours per week, the government could offer to pay the first 24 hours, to any business which agreed to pay the remaining 16 hours and all of the normal benefits. Under this plan, the total payroll cost to business of creating a new minimum wage position, including benefits, would only be about \$2.63 per hour for a part-time worker, and about \$3.29 per hour for a full-time worker. If, in spite of such low payroll costs, the private sector still cannot afford to solve our country's unemployment crisis, then society is in serious trouble. If this turns out to be the case, then perhaps finally the public debate would move beyond simply blaming the victims of a jobless society and focus on the real issues and solutions to our social and economic problems.

The job creation program would help reduce the cost of wages for any new job, regardless of the level of pay, but even minimum wage jobs would be much better for recipients than what workfare has in store for them. Currently the maximum welfare benefit that a single person can receive is \$520 per month (although most single people receive much less). Under the new system, a single person working part-time (24 hours per week) would earn a take-home pay of about \$688. Only recipients with a family to support would qualify for the full-time positions which would pay, after taxes, about \$1,056 a month, an amount which is greater than what most families are now receiving in welfare benefits. To ensure that employers don't try to exploit the program by laying off many of their regular employees, the government could limit the number of welfare recipients that any individual organization could hire, restricting it to say one-third of their part-time and one-third of their full-time staff. If one out of every three part-time workers in an organization was a former welfare recipient, the total average payroll cost (at the minimum wage) to that organization, including benefits, would only be about \$5.67 per hour for a part-time worker and about \$6.03 per hour for a full-time worker.

Under the proposed plan, there would be no need to alter labour laws or rewrite any human rights legislation. The plan would reduce the likelihood that the creation of a conscripted workforce would exert a downward pressure on all other wage rates. It would demonstrate that most people are eager to work by creating the job opportunities that need to exist in order for them to be able to prove it. The program puts the onus on the private sector to substantiate their claim to be “the engine of growth” in the economy and transfers the embarrassment of welfare from the individual to the employer. As new jobs are created, the welfare rolls will shrink and the cost of social assistance will decline because of a reduction of need, not because of a reduction of

Our Economy is an Addiction

As the twentieth chapter in the book of centuries is concluded, the ecological stress of our planet and the emotional and spiritual strain of our people testify to the destructive nature of our economic addictions. It is highly unlikely that the ecological basis of life will survive for another full century. The destruction of our clean air and water supply, of our fertile top soil and our productive agricultural land continues to accelerate toward the point of no return. The destruction of our primal forests and the diversity of the genetic materials that they sustain is dangerously near completion. The waste of our non-renewable resources continues in a desperate attempt to expand an already excessive-compulsive set of unquenchable, materialistic desires. Any deeper meaning or responsibility for our lives beyond the here and now, the fast and furious, have been abandoned. Unable to comprehend the full extent of the damage that we are inflicting on the planet, and horrified by the consequences that we can predict, most people simply bury their heads in the sand and carry on with their own personal struggles for achievement and reward. In fact, in these times of high unemployment, there is a growing hostility towards anyone who suggests that perhaps we should slow down and re-evaluate the economic principles and priorities of our species. Even the collapse of our fisheries has not been enough to force people to accept the inevitable unemployment and economic crisis that all Canadians will soon have to face once our natural resource base is exhausted.

Like all drug and alcohol or gambling addicts, we continue to deny that our addictions are harmful. “My personal expectations and consumption patterns are not excessive ...look around you everyone consumes as much as I do”. As the twenty-first century approaches, however, it is becoming much harder to ignore all those who cannot consume as much as the “normal” people in the western world who are still lucky enough to be earning a decent living. Now, even within our own nations, the economy is failing a growing number of our own citizens and in the less-developed regions of the world, the incidence of poverty and violence is appalling. But the addicts continue to dismiss the victims as “losers” and blame them for their own shortcomings. The addicts refuse to acknowledge that their economic success *requires* the economic suppression of the victims. As the productive capacity of the earth reaches its ecological and financial limits, the addicts invent new monetary techniques and devices which allow their exploitive, profit-generating games to continue. As the healthy productive tissue of the global economy continues to degenerate, the speculative financial diseases flourish. Today, for every dollar spent producing goods and services in the Canadian economy, over sixty-five dollars are spent in the financial economy, but the financial economy is merely a house of cards which is precariously reliant on debt repayments. Once enough people can no longer service their interest costs, then the financial cards come tumbling down and, as in the 1920's, the winds of change are now spiralling dangerously close around us.

We must all wake up and look beyond our own immediate self-interest. Are you prepared to sit back and let the addicts lead us into the abyss? Have we really learned so little from our history? Do we or do we not live in a democracy? Are you willing to exert the individual effort that is necessary to rehabilitate democracy and rebuild a healthy economy? Are you willing to take a personal responsibility and demand a more sustainable future for your children and your grandchildren? Are we any less capable than our ancestors of envisioning a better world, or any less committed to freeing ourselves from the iron grip of finance? Are you too doped up to care?

If it is no longer possible to reject the morals, culture and laws of our society and to live independently, apart from society, is it really true that we are all born free? If all of the land on this earth is owned by others, how is it possible to engage our right of freedom? If we can claim no land upon which to live and cultivate food then independence is impossible and our freedom is merely a myth. In reality, we are born as prisoners of an economic system which we have no choice but to accept. As long as we adhere to the rules that are set out before us, we are given the right to exist on this planet. If however we do not agree with the culture that the our financial masters have spun for us, then there is no place on earth for us to go. What rights does a penniless pauper really have?

Born Slaves



The notion that this earth, the common mother of all life, could actually be "owned" privately is really quite astonishing when you think about it. What arrogant, self-infatuated fool first thought up the concept of owning the gift of creation. How could we let such a power-hungry maniac convince us that such an idea had any merit? Is not the history of human life on this planet little more than a pitiful story of greed and corruption? Is not the foundation of our "civilization" merely the conquest and annihilation of all of the more peaceful cultures which could not understand or resist our aggression? Was not the taking by force and redistribution of the captured land and wealth merely an act of robbery. Would

we not imprison anyone who tried to confiscate our property in the same way? And today, as we use monetary warfare to enslave the weaker beings among us and move into the patenting of seeds, genetic materials and even life forms, have we learned a single thing from our disgusting past? Aren't we now even more spiritually and ethically corrupt than before?

Birds and wild animals have more rights and freedoms than humans do. Birds and animals, at least, can still roam the planet unrestricted by human laws and conventions (until, of course, we hunt them down ...for sport or for profit). Birds and animals need not seek our approval for their lifestyle, nor toil for our benefit to "earn" their right to exist. Yet as we humans evolve and grow we have nearly completely plundered their domain. Good lord, can we not co-exist with any other living thing? When shall our respect for creation rise up and remove from power the ill-tempered and hostile children who now direct us? Will there ever be a place on earth again for all those who wish to flee from the global mono-culture of materialism that is destroying our precious planet? Will human beings ever again be free to independently explore their own possibilities and to live in wonder? Will the earth even contain the bounty necessary to sustain us? God forgive us for misusing the gift of our intelligence, for living so disrespectfully, and for destroying the miracle of life that was given to us. Sometimes I'm so ashamed to be a human being.

compassion. Even if every welfare recipient found employment under the plan (which is highly unlikely since so many who are now receiving welfare are either sick, disabled or aged), the provincial government would still save over \$370 million dollars a year ...that's more than \$1.1 billion over three years!

Until such a program is implemented and tested, the government should abandon its dead-end workfare agenda which will surely fail to create any valuable or productive new jobs or

to reduce the incidence of poverty and dependency. Whether or not minimum-wage jobs really reduce poverty, or perpetuate it, is another important, but separate, issue. A more effective, long-term solution to our poverty and unemployment problems will still have to be worked out, but in the meantime, this idea provides a more productive and dignified short-term solution than Tsubouchi's oppressive workfare scheme. The table below summarizes some of the main financial parameters of the plan (the estimates of current social assistance costs may be quite low).

A WORKFARE ALTERNATIVE	minimum required for single *				• minimum required for family	
	- Government Costs -		----- Business Costs -----		----- Worker Earnings -----	
	Single	Family	Part-time*	Full-time•	Part-time*	Full-time•
Minimum Wage	\$6.85	\$6.85	\$6.85	\$6.85	\$6.85	\$6.85
Benefit rate			5.0%	8.0%	5.0%	8.0%
Benefit cost			\$0.34	\$0.55	\$0.34	\$0.55
Max/min. hrs @ wk	16.00	24.00	24.00	40.00	24.00	40.00
Max/min. hrs @ month	72.00	108.00	108.00	180.00	108.00	180.00
Cost per week						
Salaries	\$109.60	\$164.40	\$54.80	\$109.60	\$164.40	\$274.00
Benefits			\$8.22	\$21.92		
Income Tax					\$11.44	\$39.38
Total per week	\$109.60	\$164.40	\$63.02	\$131.52	\$152.96	\$234.62
Cost per month						
Salaries	\$493.20	\$739.80	\$246.60	\$493.20	\$739.80	\$1,233.00
Benefits			\$36.99	\$98.64		
Income Tax					\$51.46	\$177.22
Total per month	\$493.20	\$739.80	\$283.59	\$591.84	\$688.34	\$1,055.78
Cost per year						
Salaries	\$5,918.40	\$8,877.60	\$2,959.20	\$5,918.40	\$8,877.60	\$14,796.00
Benefits			\$443.88	\$1,183.68		
Income Tax					\$617.51	\$2,126.70
Total per year	\$5,918.40	\$8,877.60	\$3,403.08	\$7,102.08	\$8,260.09	\$12,669.30
Cost per hour (incl. benefits)			\$2.63	\$3.29		
Current Social Assistance Costs						
Assistance Payments	\$4,500,000,000					
Workfare Program	\$150,000,000					
General Administration	\$225,000,000					
Total Annual Cost	\$4,875,000,000					
New Program Costs						
Singles		216,000			\$1,278,374,400	
Families		400,000			\$3,551,040,000	
less income tax collected					\$328,020,576	
Total Annual Cost					\$4,501,393,824	
Total Annual Savings					(\$373,606,176)	

The Evolution of Society



One of the most hopeful consequences of all the recent economic turmoil in the First World democratic nations is that it has caused many average citizens to finally start questioning some of the ideological foundations upon which capitalism rests. When economic times are good and most people are benefiting from the financial prosperity that capitalism can generate, few are motivated to question the source of their own prosperity. The popular phrase "...if it ain't broke, don't fix it" sums up this idea nicely. Once a sufficient number of people are excluded from the employment mechanism which is used to distribute the rewards of capitalism, however, the odds are that a serious re-examination of the moral principles of the system will soon occur. The popular notion that self-interest is the usual motivation for enlightenment is probably true in most cases.

As the "personal world" around them begins to collapse, most people become highly motivated to start questioning the integrity of society's economic system which, up until recently may have seemed fine to them, but now clearly appears to be broken. *These moments in history provide the impetus for change and create the opportunities for the evolution and advancement of our civilization.* These times *bring home* the injustice that is inherent in the global economic system, but that is usually far removed from the day-to-day lives of most citizens of the western world. Only when the system begins to fail in the most powerful nations, is there any hope for those trapped in the poverty of the weakest nations. Only when the hopelessness of poverty and unemployment begins to tear apart our own communities can we begin to comprehend the devastation that it creates in the Third World. The degree to which people are willing to go to understand and solve the economic problems of the planet, however, varies enormously. The problems only create the opportunity for civilization's advancement, not any certainty that it will occur. *It is whether or not a majority of the people are willing to make the effort necessary to understand the root causes of their problems which determines the degree of evolution that can be achieved.*

According to the evolutionists, humankind won the struggle to survive in the jungle and ascended from the ape. Over time, the law of the jungle was slowly transformed into the law of the land and our predatory instincts became less necessary for our physical survival. Although wars persisted, outright physical aggression became socially unpopular and was discour-

aged. Tribal cannibalism became more "civilized" and was subtly transformed into *economic cannibalism*. The dominance of one group or culture still often resulted in the extinction of another, but at least we stopped eating each other. What the current global economic crisis helps make perfectly clear is that all of our technological development hasn't really helped humankind evolve much socially, ethically or spiritually. It does, however, highlight the necessity for the next step in our evolution to begin.

Many barriers can prevent the average citizen from understanding the roots of our problems. Feelings of intellectual incompetence, or the idea that the issues are too complex for "ordinary citizens" to comprehend, are often deliberately manufactured by obscuring the issues in a cloudy vocabulary of specialized terms and language that only the "experts" can understand. This vocabulary often co-opts commonly understood and powerful, emotionally-positive words and then deliberately uses them in manipulative and misleading ways in order to shape public opinion. [for example, "*doing more* (for whom?) *with less* (for whom?)", "*right* (for whom?) *-sizing*", "*creating opportunities*" (what kind of opportunities, for who's benefit, at who's expense?), etc.] The popular truism "bullshit baffles brains" is a coarse, but accurate, way to describe the negative effects that language can have on public awareness. Restricting the public's access to information, combined with an incomplete or unbalanced exposure to a particular ideological analysis of "the facts" behind the issues, is another excellent way to divert the public's attention away from the roots of their problems. Manufacturing a never-ending series of "crisis" issues also helps to limit the scope and depth of any public discussion of the underlying problems. By perpetuating a crisis-management mentality and creating a sense of urgency, our leaders can smother dissent by stimulating public support for swift, definitive government action. Maintaining an emotional environment of hopelessness, anxiety and despair also helps to disempower people. People without hope, usually don't have much energy to invest into independent research. People who are busy struggling to survive financially tend to rely on the mainstream media to provide them with the information that they need to understand the world around them; but it is the media's coverage of the issues which perpetuates the very sense of hopelessness which entraps them.

Perhaps the most effective means of limiting the depth of

the public's understanding of our problems, however, is to control the means by which information is collected and distributed to the population. The government's bureaucratic structure and process of operations is organized in a way that stifles most average citizens who attempt to penetrate it. Only those who have tremendous financial resources at their disposal can obtain the ear of the government's most influential officials directly. The ideas and opinions of average citizens are filtered and absorbed into layer upon layer of bureaucratic tissue and only rarely do they ever reach the top. The same is true when it comes to getting information out to the general public. The mainstream media applies similar screening procedures to the ideas and opinions of the public. Letters to the editor must be kept so short that any in-depth development of an argument is impossible, and no one can get articles published about any issues or ideas which have been tabooed by the media's owners. Only those who have tremendous financial resources at their disposal can catch the attention of the public through the media. Even our schools and universities are becoming dependent on "partnerships" with the corporate and financial elites. To believe that this will not have any influence on the curriculum or bias the content of the primary learning materials is simply naive.

Yet despite these obstacles, many people are beginning to wake up and to educate themselves. Thousands of Canadians now belong to organizations which explain the causes of our country's problems much differently than the economic "experts" and our political leaders do. Thousands more read alternative media publications, such as HOPE, which describe completely different solutions to Canada's problems than those which are discussed in the mainstream media. As more and more Canadian families are affected personally by the failure of our economy, the pressure for change is growing rapidly from coast-to-coast. Whether or not enough Canadians will realize that the primary cause of all of our social and economic problems is the inherent structural weakness of our debt-based monetary system remains to be seen. If enough do, however, then it may be possible to finally evolve beyond the present age of scarcity and desperate global competition and usher in a wonderful new co-operative era of sustainable growth and development in which all of the world's peoples will prosper. Can we still save this world? ...you bet we can! ...and it is difficult times that create the opportunity for change.