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## BASIC REFORMS IN LAND AND MONEY APPEAL IN INDIA

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Crucial current developments in India could have significant impact on world stability and humanization of culture. Insight into them calls for attention to India's political leader, Narayan, and to an American educator and social philosopher, Ralph Borsodi.

Ralph Borsodi opened the door for the emerging (1979) concern for "small is beautiful" and decentralization both by his productive homesteading in the '20s, and his half-century of writing\*. As a young business man in New York City, he and his family went to the country, built their Dogwoods homestead from the ground up, and showed its economic and social significance in This Ugly Civilization (Harpers 1928). He described his homesteading in more detail in Flight from The City, 1933. For fifty years he probed and practised, experimented and published. The ethical social institutions which he set up had impact on farmers, business men, education, government and everyone who took time to look and understand.

His distress at poverty, robotism and exploitation in modern centralized industrialism led to his decision for ~~starting~~ a new adult education. He established the School of Living in 1936, and through it to the present (deceased in 1977) he worked for two major reforms -- in land tenure and in money and credit. In 1939 he published Inflation Is Coming, the same year that E. C. Baxter published No Inflation Coming. Borsodi explained to Americans the wisdom of investing their savings in tangible, productive homesteads. And then went on to a long-range improved banking-

\*A list of Dr. Borsodi's books and research studies is available from School of Living

system that would take the issuance of money out of the hands of government. He showed how to put it into peoples' cooperatives -- and issue stable money based on and backed by staple commodities (wheat, corn, coal, oil, peanuts, etc.) instead of on "debt" or a single metal. He later ~~xxxx~~ experimented with it for a year and called it Constants, a non-inflationary currency.

In 1943, troubled by the Second World War and its forbidding aftermath, Borsodi issued a unique World Peace Plan,\* based on an ethical global treatment of land and underground minerals -- coal, metals, oil. Earlier, Borsodi had developed in several cooperative, intentional communities, a community ~~xxxx~~ trusteeship of land, rather than private ownership of it. Families still owned their homes and labor products. Borsodi envisioned a whole world that acknowledged the difference between Nature-created resources and humanly-produced ~~xxxxxxx~~ objects, such as buildings, machines and equipment. His life was dedicated to showing the injustice of individuals, corporations, monarchs, or Nations claiming "title" to under-earth resources of oil, minerals and metals.\*

To interact with leaders in other countries, in 1950 Ralph Borsodi began a series of travels abroad -- to Spain, France, Switzerland and later to the Far East. After interviews with editors, religious and political leaders (in China, Japan, Thailand and India, Borsodi completed The Challenge of Asia in 1956. He described ~~xxxx~~ prevailing conditions, showing the roots of misery in land-privilege and speculation and centralized industrialism. He urged Asians to improve and maintain their family, and village patterns, rather than duplicate Western industrialism's errors.

Among those who welcomed Borsodi's approach were followers of Gandhi--many of them unknown, but some recognized leaders, including J. P. Narayan, once prime minister. Borsodi and Narayan recognized the similarity between the Gandhian village-holding of land (Gramdan) and Borsodi's community land trusteeship. Narayan also saw

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\*Copy of Borsodi's unique Peace Plan can be had from School of Living for 25¢.

the need for a people's money-banking system which Borsodi proposed, to assist impoverished, landless people to independent survival. Both men agreed that ethical land and money systems were needed the world over. Together they planned that Narayan should visit America, and there begin a nation-wide campaign to awaken Americans to such reforms. While developing political stress in India prevented Narayan's tour, Ralph Borsodi returned to America for significant work to sponsor his <sup>enging</sup> challenge ~~programs~~ programs.

In the United States, Robert Swann, active in pacifist and <sup>civil-</sup> ~~rights~~ movements, was in <sup>our</sup> ~~the~~ Southern states to assist Martin Luther King in preventing the racial tension from erupting violently. Appalled by the helplessness and hopelessness of so many people, Robert Swann decided that their poverty must be ended. The basic step to non-violence, he concluded, was improved economic conditions. He agreed with Ralph Borsodi that both blacks and whites needed access to land.

Robert Swann and Ralph Borsodi worked for months developing the legal and practical aspects of <sup>ing</sup> ~~an~~ international program that would enable all persons to attain land and credit. Designed to help people establish their own homes, homesteads, <sup>and</sup> ~~by~~ businesses and small communities, they named their new organization The International Institute of Independence. Robert Swann described it in a new book, The Community Land Trust, A New Land Tenure for America. Ralph Borsodi went to register the I.I.I. in Luxembourg, and on to India to lecture and study in the Gandhian University at Amnabad, India. There for several years, he wrote his magnum opus, a "curriculum:" for adult education, titled, Seventeen Major Problems of Individuals and Society.

Thus the fortunate intertwining of concepts, books and program of two great decentralists --Ralph Borsodi and Mohandas Gandhi--was facilitated by their co-workers, Robert Swann and J. P. Narayan. The <sup>v</sup> impact of decentralism has been felt. Some of its influences on the current scene are described by Robert Swann

following his December 1978 visit to India.

In this time of questioning and ideological struggle, one dominant trend in India is the Gandhian emphasis on village development and appropriate technology. The other is the Marxist thinking that dominates the colleges and universities advocating "modernization" under socialism. Indeed, the Gandhians also struggle over whether to concentrate on the village level, or to influence the government; and on what technology is appropriate, and if "the industrialists don't transfer to 'trustees' 30 years, shouldn't violence be used to accomplish it?"

Talking in many Indian ashrams, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~, Robert Swann described /American conditions. ~~Ma~~ Indians heard about America's greatest threat to our security --'industrialism' peak in the atom-nuclear bombs. They heard about our dependence on vulnerable fuel energy; about our farmers being driven into cities because of lifetime mortgages. Actually, Swann said, "America should learn from countries like India --to live on less, to organize in smaller units. He too urged Indians not to follow ~~the~~ the industrial west's mistaken course --of always raising standard of living until it threatens people's survival. Swann's message was prominently reported in Indian press and welcomed in many places.

In India, bureaucracy is rampant. Even the Janata Party, now with influence and preferable to Indira Gandhi's party--is stifled by bureaucracy. One Indian said, "When the British left India, an Indian elite assumed power at the top of the existing (mostly Indian) bureaucracy. The new rulers only followed the policies laid down by the British." Yet Swann discovered and worked with a group committed to building what Gandhi called "a village republic".

Robert Swann introduced an independent money system of the Borsodi Institute of Independence. (Robert Swann now directs this institute under the title Institute of Community Economics.) 120 Boylston St., Boston.) This money system would be

would be based on local production ~~using~~ using (and later other products) wheat and rice/as its standard. With this, a villager could be independent of the central government. And Indian leader who had given a lot of thought to this asked Swann to draft a proposal. "We need help ~~to~~ to free our people from the illegal money lenders who charge 10% or more a month on borrowed money, which ~~they~~ <sup>our people</sup> can never pay." More than 70% of the villagers are affected by this (time-honored) practice!//

Swann's report is basis for hope. With the village (community) trusteeship of land and proposal and plans for a decentralist money-system, the Gandhian alternative to capitalism and communism becomes a high spot in the internationalizing of a decentralist movement. Robert Swann will attend an international conference on trusteeship in Bangalore, India in October 1979 ~~and~~ <sup>to</sup> present a paper on a World Resources Trust, incorporating the ~~trusteeship~~ trusteeship of both land and money.

In sum the decentralist - humanizing way so long ago presented in America by Ralph Borsodi, and later in India, is needed for the advancement of life on all sides of the globe. Perhaps it is in the School of Living's kind of "green" revolution that the East and West shall meet.