

De-Developing the United States through Nonviolence

By Bill Moyer

Reprinted from IDOC-North America, 1973. (www.idoc-human-renewal.org/idoc/profile.html)
(This speech on nonviolent direct action was given at an international conference of ecology groups in Holland in 1972.)

© William Moyer 1973

“We are as rich as our ability to do without things.” Thoreau

It is conventional wisdom to argue that the less “advanced” countries should strive to become like the most industrialized countries, for example, like the United States. Here William Moyer argues for a reverse approach, de-developing the countries which are putting the most severe pressure on the ecosphere. He shows how the strategies of militant nonviolent action might be employed in this cause.

Ecology activists need a long-range strategy and a powerful method for change. In this presentation, I will advocate **de-development—the reduction of production and consumption of material goods—of the United States as a long-range strategy**. I will also suggest that the American civil rights movement’s **powerful but neglected weapon of nonviolent campaign-movement is a means for implementing this strategy**. Finally, a campaign-movement for a moratorium on atomic energy will be described. (1)

Economic growth is a universally accepted elixir for solving social problems. It has been a point of agreement among business and government, the oppressed, militants, and humanitarians. Unquestioned faith in Western-type growth and development, however, has been challenged by recent events: rapid economic growth with increased poverty, recognition of the limits of resources and absorbing capacities of the environment, and the ending of poverty by China without going through the stages of Western development.

To begin, it might be instructive to imagine a world in which the impossible dream of Western development was achieved. **If all the nations achieved U.S. per capita conditions and levels of consumption, their problems would still be immense regardless of their affluence.** Every city would have massive slums and unsafe streets. The top 2% of the world’s population would hold the same amount of wealth as the bottom 94%. National budgets would officially spend \$1.4 trillion on military production each year. About 75 million workers would be officially unemployed, another 30 million would be unofficially unemployed, and 170 million would still be hungry. In mainland China, if per capita American conditions were attained, 22 million people now working would become unemployed, 35 million who are now adequately fed would become hungry, and massive slums and crime would return to China’s cities. These conditions would most likely precipitate another people’s revolution. (2)

Moreover, it would be ecologically disastrous if the rest of the world were brought up to today’s United States consumption rate: there are not enough resources (including minerals, fossil fuels, air, water), and the environment’s pollution-absorption capacity is not great enough. The world’s annual consumption would increase sevenfold, depleting within this century almost every key nonrenewable resource. It is hard to imagine a sevenfold increase in the rate of environmental deterioration, not to mention that American production and consumption is supposed to triple by the year 2000. Without numerous technological miracle breakthroughs which reduce environmental destruction (so far, most have increased it), even if this generation survived, the next one wouldn’t. (3) Complete world development, however, may never occur.

Not even the U.N.'s most idealistic planners expect the poor nations to ever achieve full development.

In the real world of today, the consequences of Western-type economic growth are disastrous for the poverty-stricken majority of the Third World. After the "Decade of Progress," World Bank President Robert McNamara laments, "The basic problems affecting the lives of the developing peoples are getting worse, not better, despite a good record of economic growth." And the U.N. reports that there are more sick, undernourished, and uneducated people in 1970 than ten years before, and that it will be worse during the decade ahead. Even in Brazil, with one of the world's highest economic growth rates for five years, the Economic Minister estimates that only 5 million people are now better off, while 50 million people are not better off, and 40 million had their living standard eroded. (4) Massive economic growth in the capitalist world widens the gap between the rich and poor nations. It also widens the gap between haves and have-nots within the poor countries; while benefits go to the affluent, the conditions of the poor deteriorate.

On the other hand, while poverty runs rampant in capitalist Third World countries, China has eliminated abject poverty without going through the stages of modern economic growth. The Chinese success at ending poverty with only half of the Brazilian per capita gross national product reveals the absurdity of using economic growth as the major guideline to measure or guide poor nations' efforts to end poverty. (5) Using this standard, Brazil should either cut its present GNP in half or increase its population four times to reach the same per capita GNP at which China ended its poverty! **Rather than Western-type economic growth, it seems that political-economic independence and a social system which first meets people's basic needs and which distributes resources equitably is required for poor nations to end poverty.**

Why the United States Must De-Develop

It is obvious that economic growth and development towards U.S. levels does not solve the world's problems. In fact, the U.S.'s present level of consumption is a cause of those problems. Devouring an estimated 40% of the world's annually consumed resources while comprising only 6% of the world's land and population, the U.S. gluttonously consumes an iniquitous share of the finite resources available. For several reasons, even the present level of U.S. consumption is immoral and unjust, not to mention the threefold increase planned within this century.

First, the resources and environment of future generations are being used up and damaged; without miracles from technology, most key nonrenewable resources will run out and the environment will be unable to support life for future generations. Until such miracles are proven realities, the U.S. should de-develop.

Second, a zero-sum game exists between Americans and the world's poor—the more one consumes, the less the other consumes. The theoretical impossibility of both the U.S. and the Third World's majority to greatly increase their consumption has already been argued. In today's real world, this conflict transfigures into diabolical practical realities. To maintain its levels of production and consumption, for example, the US. must be assured of getting increasing amounts of the resources (because of its own decreasing reserves) of poor countries, and at a fraction of their open market value.

This, in turn, requires strong American support of unpopular and dictatorial regimes which maintain political and police oppression while serving American interests, to the detriment of their own poor majorities. If, on the other hand, Third World people controlled their political economies, the export prices of their primary products would be significantly increased (as the oil-producing countries are now doing). They could then use more of their resources themselves

(much of the land now used to grow export cash crops—such as coffee, cocoa, bananas, tea, rubber—would be used to feed their own hungry, for example). The quantity of extracted resources could be reduced both to keep prices up and to preserve them for future use. A reduction in American consumption would also result from an independent Third World as a consequence of reduced American overseas profits, royalties, and fees.

Third, the political and economic prerequisites for American high-consumption, as indicated above, require suppression of democracy in poor countries.

Fourth, the maintenance of dictatorships, in turn, requires that the U.S. economy produce vast amounts of military weapons and necessitates never-ending wars. The U.S. will have to equip dictators' armies throughout the Third World to eternally fight peoples' liberation movements, and the U.S. military will continually have to directly intervene, as in Indochina, when regimes collapse. There will never be a peace dividend because there will never be a peace as long as the U.S. must protect its inordinate level of consumption at the top of the capitalist world's political-economic chain.

Nonviolent Campaign-Movements and Social Change

Powerful methods of social change are needed to oppose the social forces causing environmental deterioration and oppression of poor peoples. In recent years, however, nonviolent direct action groups have tended to use the less-powerful techniques of one-day marches, rallies, pickets, and guerrilla theater, during which opponents have too easily been able to go on vacation or to watch football games on television. **Ecology and other action groups could greatly increase their effectiveness by using the methods of the nonviolent campaign-movements which were so successful during the civil rights movement in the early 1960s.**

On the assumption that the nonviolent campaign-movement method is seldom used because people are unfamiliar with it, a brief description of some of its basic principles and organizing techniques will be presented, with examples drawn from past campaigns.

Two scenarios of past campaigns

At the White House, in January, 1965, President Johnson told Martin Luther King and others that he could not advocate a voting rights bill that year because of an obstinate Congress. During the next few months, however, the voting rights movement escalated its campaign in Selma, Alabama. Throughout February, there were repeated attempts at voting registration by blacks, along with supporting marches and demonstrations, that were to culminate in a march from Selma to Montgomery, the state capital, on March 7. On that Sunday afternoon, however, Alabama state troopers charged into the lines of 525 marchers just after they had crossed the now infamous Edmund Petus Bridge outside of Selma. Troopers on foot freely clubbed unarmed, nonviolent marchers in the front ranks, and troopers on horseback savagely pursued those retreating across the bridge. Sixteen people were hospitalized and 50 more were given emergency medical treatment. Through the eyes of the national and international press, the world watched with bated breath this crisis as well as others that followed. The 50-mile march was belatedly completed at the end of the month with a victorious rally of 25,000 people in front of the state capitol building in Montgomery.

The blatant and violent denial of the basic democratic right to vote revealed by the campaign impelled people and organizations throughout the nation and the world to actively support a voting rights bill. Many people went to Selma and Montgomery to join the demonstrations, others acted through established religious or civic organizations, and new groups formed especially for the voting rights campaign. Thousands of unaffiliated individuals urged their

Congresspeople and President to pass a strong voting rights law. Local supporting demonstrations were held in hundreds of cities throughout the country. Although the Selma campaign had ended by April, the upswell of public pressure continued until a strong bill was written by President Johnson and passed by Congress in August.

In the spring of 1971, a more recent nonviolent campaign-movement was begun by a less heralded, ad hoc group to which I belong in Philadelphia. President Nixon's administration had publicly announced that it had stopped foreign aid as well as all other shipments to Pakistan's military government, which was murderously invading Bangladesh. However, we learned that freighters were carrying a steady flow of American military and economic materials to Pakistan. The idea of blockading the ports of Philadelphia and Baltimore to these freighters by a nonviolent flotilla of canoes was proposed, and seemed to have the potential of calling public attention, through the media, to the secretive, immoral American shipments. We didn't think it possible, however, that any freighters would be actually stopped. Throughout the summer, newspapers and television newscasts focused the public's attention on Pakistani freighters as they were blockaded in American ports. Surprisingly, most of the scheduled ships never arrived in port—possibly to avert the publicity—thereby automatically making the blockade attempts successful.

For example, of the five Pakistani freighters scheduled for Philadelphia, only one, the *Al-Ahmadi*, even attempted to come into the port. Its docking took hours as the big ship threaded a path, with help from a fleet of police boats, through the canoe blockade. Two days later, the longshoremen, who had been negotiating with the blockaders for weeks, refused to load the ship. After several sailors deserted on the third day, the freighter departed in disgrace, leaving its 1,100-ton cargo on the dock. The two ships scheduled for Boston also did not appear; and throughout the country longshoremen refused to load military equipment on Pakistani freighters. In some cities they would not load any goods for Pakistan.

Perhaps more important than the actual ship blockade was the public pressure to oppose American support of Pakistan which was generated by the campaign. According to the "Pakistan Papers," public opposition was an important consideration in the White House's decision to give only minor help to the Pakistani government rather than to intervene militarily.

Long-range goals as "generating themes"

Nonviolent campaign-movements must be based not only on the concrete concern with medium-range goals such as voting rights, equal job opportunities, and equal service at restaurants, but also on a concern with long-range goals which involve broader, more abstract principles, such as "civil rights." Every campaign **should project such an overall theme which is both its long-range goal and an ethical principle accepted by the general population.** In this way, **long-range goals can become "generating themes" which can generate new campaigns in several ways.**

First, when one medium-range goal is reached, the people and the public are prepared to go on to the next one. By using "civil rights" as a generating theme in the voting rights campaign, both blacks and the general public were prepared to move successively from one civil rights issue to another, from buses to restaurants to voting booths to employment offices.

Second, the use of long-range goals as campaign themes often stimulates people in different places to start their own campaigns on issues which affect them. Voting campaigns based on the themes of civil rights in one area often stimulated civil rights' employment or housing campaigns in other areas. If the opposition to the Indochina War had linked the long-range goals of ending U.S. support of all dictatorships, for example, to its short-range goals of ending the killing and correcting a mistake, both peace activists and the public might be more prepared now for

campaigns against U.S. support of oppressive regimes in Brazil, the Philippines, South Africa, and elsewhere.

Third, long-range goals often serve as criteria for selecting short-range goals for potential campaigns or for deciding whether or not to accept compromise solutions which are offered in ongoing campaigns. In seeking services at restaurants, blacks were sometimes offered “take out” service where it had been refused previously, but they declined this compromise because, although it was service and it was a new breakthrough, it was inconsistent with the long-range goal of equal rights.

Theory of social change

The nonviolent campaign-movement’s theoretical view of society and change is similar to that of the sociologist Max Weber: in every society, social systems distribute most of the benefits and resources to a relatively few people (the “positively privileged”), and distribute what remains among the majority (the “negatively privileged”). That the system—not individual effort—distributes resources and is responsible for gross inequalities has to be kept a secret, to keep the negatively privileged from rebelling and to keep the positively privileged from rejecting their advantages. The ways the system maldistributes benefits, therefore, Weber called **societal secrets. To hide these secrets, societies develop a public set of beliefs, values and ideologies called societal myths, which are exactly the opposite of societal secrets. The population is socialized to believe so strongly in the rightness of the myths, that when societal secrets are revealed, they will take vigorous action to change the unjust condition. A key to change, therefore, is to reveal clearly societal secrets and their corresponding myths. This is similar to Gandhi’s notion of “truth force:” when people see the truth of an unjust situation, they will try to change. it.**

The nonviolent “socio-drama”

Nonviolent campaign-movements, even those which are nationwide, usually begin modestly, often with a small, localized “socio-drama” campaign, such as in Selma. **Some characteristics of socio-dramas include the following:**

Based on a widely held principle

The voting rights movement, for example, was based on the widely held principle that every American adult has the right to vote.

Reveal a specific societal secret and its accompanying myths

It had been a secret that the social system prevented blacks from voting in the American South. This was hidden by the perpetuation of beliefs (societal myths) such as “blacks don’t want to vote” or “they are not ready to vote.” One Southern voting registrar, for example, reported on national television that in 35 years not one black had come to register in his office. Consequently, although it was generally acknowledged that few, if any, blacks voted in the South, there was little concern. In fact, the myths were so effective that some Northern whites were disgruntled at Southern blacks for not being patriotic enough to vote. The voting rights campaign-movement, however, revealed to the public that blacks wanted to vote, but were systematically prevented from doing so.

Offer an alternative

Campaigns should also offer an alternative to the present situation. Long lines of blacks lined up at voting registration offices showed the alternative of blacks voting. This is consistent with Gandhi’s view that the ends should be symbolized in the means.

Reduce issues to a picture

Socio-drama campaigns should reduce the problem to its simplest form, a picture; ideally, few or no words should be needed. This is accomplished by portraying the societal secret and its accompanying myths in a real-life dramatization of the problem, lived out by the demonstrators and other parties to the problem. This differs from street theater, which is a play, in which actors impersonate the real participants. Again using the voting rights example, almost daily national television and newspaper pictures showed blacks lined up to vote—disproving the myth that blacks were disinterested in voting. The pictures also showed police and other whites harassing, beating, and arresting polite, conciliatory blacks waiting in voter-registration lines—thereby revealing the secret that the social system viciously prevented blacks from voting. Moreover, the pictures of sadistic white violence raised questions about the civility of whites and whether *they* were too uncivilized to vote. **When the message is in picture form, the effects of media misinterpretations and opposition statements are reduced.**

Drama and crises over time

One important task of a campaign is to put the public spotlight on the secret and the myths. Another is to escalate a small and localized campaign into a nationwide movement by educating and stimulating people to action. To achieve these tasks, the **campaign's pictures must be dramatic**, almost melodramatic, with suspense, crises, and sensational episodes, so that they will be newsworthy as well as exciting and interesting enough to attract new participants. Also, a news snowballing effect should occur; the more an issue is in the news, the more newsworthy it becomes. **In time, the spotlight of the "socio-drama" converts a previously hidden societal secret into a public issue.**

The media is a crucial means to educate, stimulate, and mobilize vast numbers of people into the movement in a relatively short time, and, thereby, build the initial actions into a powerful nationwide campaign-movement. Media coverage is also important to counter the opposition which itself uses the media to hide secrets and perpetuate myths. One evening on the three U.S. national TV news programs, for example, reaches as many people as would be reached by a century of nightly meetings with 100 people. The drama of the Selma voting rights campaign was watched worldwide as one crisis followed another for several months, generating a broad upswelling of pressure on President Johnson and the Congress. And in 1971, the drama of 22 canoes confronting the Vietnam-bound Navy ammunition ship, the U.S.S. *Nitro*, with 17 persons arrested blocking its loading trains, was projected on national television where it was given more time than the men who were on the moon at that time. Within weeks, "people's blockades" were spontaneously being organized across the country.

One story a day

Groups often make the mistake of using all their newsworthy ideas on one day, gaining little more media coverage than would one story, but losing the media for the following weeks. When newsworthy events are used one day at a time, however, media coverage is greatly increased, and a demonstration can become a campaign.

Nonviolent discipline

The least amount of violence or untoward conduct by demonstrators usually becomes the news story of a demonstration, regardless of how well societal secrets and myths are revealed. And too often police provocateurs, militarists, or just people easily provoked to violence, join demonstrations as participants. It is important, therefore, to maintain a strict nonviolent discipline. One way to do this is to assure that, at the beginning of every demonstration, participants agree to a statement of discipline, decided ahead of time at an open

meeting of participants, and provided as a leaflet to demonstrators. Each demonstration should also have a cadre of specially trained, nonviolent facilitators, and as many participants as possible should be given some training.

Choose an important, timely, and repeatable issue which has a “handle”

The Pakistani freighter blockades, for example, were chosen because the war and the possible famine it could induce were calamities. The blockades were timely because the war was occurring that year only. Also, the freighters sailing into American ports provided a good handle to expose the secret that the U.S. was supporting Pakistan. And the blockades were repeatable in other ports.

Escalating a local socio-drama into a national campaign-movement

When activists try to organize nationwide events in their traditional manner, that is, by first forming a coalition of sponsoring groups, one of three disconcerting outcomes may occur. All three outcomes begin with months of frustrating negotiations among organizational leaders, with little opportunity for input by the rank and file demonstrators. First, negotiations may fail and the attempt be aborted. Second, agreement may be reached on the lowest common denominators regarding issues, speakers, and actions; for example, a throng is called to a one-day march and rally. Third, agreement may be reached on very little, for example, time and place, with people encouraged to do their own thing, such as happened at the 1968 and 1972 political conventions. These demonstrations were unable to control *agents provocateurs* and militants from capturing most of the publicity with petty violence to property and skirmishes with police. Their failure, which is generally agreed upon, also stemmed from their brevity and predetermined endings. Another drawback was the months wasted in preparation.

Rather than trying to organize disparate organizations into a coalition, the campaign-movement approach encourages groups to organize whatever local socio-dramas they believe to be creative and important. Small groups begin small projects in different places, joining others only when interests coincide. The key here is not size of initial numbers, but the ability to organize a local campaign with drama, crises, and other socio-drama elements. Even when all these ingredients are present, however, there is no guarantee that a project will take off into a full-fledged movement.

The strategy of the campaign-movement approach to nationwide efforts is that if enough independent socio-drama projects are begun, there soon will be one which reaches a take-off point, with much drama, crisis, publicity, and interest. At this “crunch” point, some people in other projects and regions can temporarily join the socio-drama taking off, for experience and training, then return to their own area to start a similar campaign. People in the original socio-drama can also travel to other areas to help start new campaigns. **This kind of strategy reduces the time wasted trying to decide on actions, results in campaigns—not one-day demonstrations—and increases the number of both local and national campaigns. Also its emphasis on decentralization makes its process of development more democratic.**

Future Scenario: A Campaign-Movement For a Nuclear Power Moratorium

The enormous economic growth projected for the United States and Europe during the coming decades depends on immense increased energy production by atomic fission plants. The Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) plans 1,000 atomic plants for the U.S. by 1990. Advocates of atomic energy claim that its risks have been reduced to minimal levels—given our future energy needs. They argue further that all energy production is harmful, but that atomic energy is the cheapest, cleanest, and safest. A growing opposition, which includes prominent scientists, is

fearful of atomic energy, however, claiming that the peaceful uses of atomic energy can be as devastating as its wartime use. They are concerned about accidents, storage, and transportation of radioactive materials, radiation levels from normal plant use, water use and pollution, sabotage, natural disasters, vulnerability of nuclear plants as targets during war, the increased possibility of nuclear war, climatic changes, and the many unknown effects.

Limited space prohibits a full presentation of the arguments against atomic energy here; however, for those not familiar with the rapidly growing literature, I will introduce several of the key concerns.

First, major nuclear accidents are both possible and potentially catastrophic. Even in maximum quality programs, there is always the possibility of accidents, as the loss of an Apollo space crew and two military nuclear submarines have demonstrated. An accident releasing 1% of the radioactivity at the fuel reprocessing plant in South Carolina, for example, would probably require an evacuation of most of the U.S. East Coast, and a core meltdown in a power plant one-fifth the size of the ones being built today would kill, according to AEC, 3,400 people (not counting long-range radioactivity deaths), would injure 45,000 people up to a radius of 45 miles, and would contaminate an area equivalent to Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Maryland, and Virginia. Yet the Emergency Core Cooling System, the ultimate safety system to prevent meltdowns, has never been tested under operating conditions and has failed all of its simulated model tests. (6)

Moreover, there have already been a number of accidents and failures at atomic plants. After the 1966 accident at the Enrico Fermi plant, officials seriously considered evacuating Detroit; the plant was then closed for four years. An AEC report on nuclear power plants in the 1960s concluded that six of the nineteen plants then built were shut down or dismantled, and, when operating, the plants functioned at an average level of 54% of their designed capacity. One type of accident which atomic plants could not withstand is a direct crash by a large airliner, as was threatened against the Oak Ridge reactor on November 11, 1972 by skyjackers if their demands were not met. It would be possible for a nation or political group to ransom the U.S. by threatening sabotage of nuclear plants or trucks, or by kamikaze-type skyjacking. This could also be done by unaffiliated mentally deranged individuals. Major earthquakes are another potential cause of accident, against which precautions can be taken, but not necessarily successful ones.

A second problem is the transportation and safe storage of nuclear waste, which must be under perpetual care for about half a million years. Over 80 million gallons are now temporarily stored in tanks which must be replaced about every 25 years while waiting for a safe, permanent storage place. In February, 1972, Milton Shaw, head of reactor development at the AEC, proclaimed that the Kansas Lyons salt mines were safe for such permanent storage. In the spring, however, the Kansas Geological Survey pointed out in *Technology Review* that the salt beds were "a bit like a piece of Swiss cheese" and that 180,000 gallons of water disappeared in a test there. Consequently, there still is not a reliable storage place—and none seems to be in sight.

Another problem with nuclear waste is the plutonium which is produced as a by-product. Plutonium is a substance most lethal to humans. If, for example, only 10 pounds were scattered evenly around the world, every person on earth probably would soon die of cancer. Yet 45 tons of the previously scarce plutonium are expected to be produced in the year 1980 and 170 tons in 1985. In the year 2000, the plutonium waste will require an estimated 52,000 truck trips—a depressing thought considering the highway accident rates. Even today, the AEC frequently transports plutonium by commercial airplane flights (in small doses of 20 grams per 100 flights) with considerable risk. Moreover, AEC Commissioner Larson says that a one or two per cent loss rate (stolen, lost, or misplaced plutonium) is normal and unavoidable. By 1980, however,

this will be 900 pounds annually. Plutonium is also dangerous because a Nagasaki-type bomb can be made relatively easily with 11 pounds of that element. The combination of its military value to political groups and its increasing availability through nuclear reactor processes make the chances of a plutonium black market considerable. Consequently, the possibility of small-scale nuclear warfare, with its hazards of radioactive poisoning, could become commonplace.

These are just a few of the dangers inherent in a reliance on nuclear energy. The purpose of providing these details has not been to argue the whole case against nuclear power, but to give several specific indicators of that concern. (7)

In general, the opposition position is similar to that of David Lilienthal, the first chairman of the AEC: "Once a bright hope shared by all mankind, including myself, the vast proliferation of atomic power plants has become one of the ugliest clouds overhanging America." (8) They argue that both the magnitude of the potential dangers and the chances of them being realized constitute too large a risk. Therefore, they demand a moratorium on atomic plants until their concerns are resolved by proven technological advances, extensive safety research and public debate. It would be better to stop economic growth than to chance ecological Armageddon. Besides, basic human needs and social problems can be better solved by redistributing resources and choosing priorities more carefully. In fact, since economic growth serves as a substitute for redistribution (that is, as long as people believe that the pie is growing and everyone will be better off tomorrow, they won't complain about the failure to redistribute), human needs might more likely be met when growth ends. Nevertheless, atomic energy grows apace.

Some of us who were involved in the Pakistani ship blockades are now considering working towards a transnational campaign-movement for a moratorium on nuclear fission energy production. The campaign would attempt to belie the societal myths that nuclear fission is a clean and safe energy source, and expose the secrets of its hazards. Such a campaign would be founded on the widely held principle that life is sacred and, therefore, hundreds of millions of lives (if not all humanity, eventually) should not be placed in jeopardy. The campaign, however, would have difficulties in reducing many of the problems to picture forms: radiation is invisible, many of the problems will not occur until some future time or instantaneously through accidents, and others are unknown because of insufficient knowledge or research.

On the other hand, there are compensatory aspects which could contribute towards the campaign's success. The enormity of the problem, for example, amply fulfills the criteria that the issue should be important, and the campaign would be timely since the age of fission energy production is at its threshold. Also, the hundreds of reactors either already operating or planned throughout the industrialized world provide a good handle for direct actions with drama and crises, and allow them to be repeated in many regions and nations. Moreover, there already are hundreds of organization and thousands of people actively opposing fission energy; many would support nonviolent campaigns for a fission moratorium.

Another problem facing the campaign which opposes atomic fission is that it implicitly challenges some fundamental aspects of our society. The cornerstone of the economic system of the capitalist world is private enterprise and its seeking of maximum profits. This requires continual growth of material production and consumption. A moratorium on atomic fission, however, will probably force a contraction of economic growth. Consequently, the campaign would be opposed by some of the most powerful forces in the society. In their own defense, the forces of private enterprise will argue that economic growth and atomic fission are necessary to end poverty in both the rich and poor nations. The campaign would have to expose the secret that economic growth in the non-socialist world benefits relatively few people while the numbers of poor increase and their conditions deteriorate.

The alternative to atomic fission and economic growth—at least until some safe source of energy is proved safe and is available to us—might include reduced consumption by the industrialized nations, redistribution of consumption between the rich and poor peoples, reduction in modern technologies which pollute and reduction in the wastage of resources. In this long-range vision of a more egalitarian world in which the industrialized nations are de-developed, the standards of happiness would be based more on human relationships and individual actualization than quantities of material consumption.

A transnational campaign-movement for a moratorium on nuclear fission could begin by local groups in different countries independently starting socio-drama campaigns against existing or planned atomic energy plants. Trucks could be blocked as they transported building materials or the reactor's core to the site. Sometimes, demonstrations might consist of only children and babies (with adult supervision), who symbolize those most victimized. In an effort to prevent construction or operation of plant, people could also live in tent cities on plant sites. For maximum drama, the squatters could march to the site. If stopped by police at the property gates, the tent city could be established there. During the following weeks, some people might make public nonviolent attempts to cross the police lines to set up tents on property. Meanwhile, teach-ins and other educational meetings could also be held at the campsite, including public hearings at which counter-expert testimony is given.

The campaign should also be carried out in nearby population centers, especially those downwind or downstream from the site. Educational activities could include marches, vigils, and public meetings. A map showing possible radiation effects which could occur at different distances from the plant could be made into a leaflet, specifying key population locations such as the school, hospital, or business district. Specific tactics, however, must be tailored to each situation. The most creative and applicable ideas, therefore, must grow out of the dynamic process of an ongoing campaign. A socio-drama of this kind could be started with a few people and could then grow into transnational campaign-movement.

© William Moyer 1973

Notes

1. Although this paper focuses on the United States, it is also applicable to other industrialized nations, which also are over-consumers and polluters. Most have about one half the per capita levels of the U.S. They also are on the verge of entering the atomic age of energy production.
2. The world figures used in this paragraph were calculated by multiplying the United States figures by 17, since the U.S. has about one-seventeenth of the world's population. The wealth percentages are also those of the United States; see Herman P. Miller, *Rich Man Poor Man* (New York, Apollo-Crowell, 1971), chart on p. 157. The U.S. military budget for 1972 was officially about \$82 billion. The United States had 4.5 million officially unemployed workers in December, 1972; see the U.S. Dept. of Commerce's *The Survey of Current Business*, January, 1973, Vol. 53, No. 1 p. 2. Those unofficially unemployed, that is, people who are unemployed or underemployed, but who want to work full-time and are not counted in the official unemployment figures, amount to about 38% of the official unemployment rate; see Joint Economic Committee of the United States Congress, *Joint Economic Report*, March 23, 1972, p. 9. *Hunger, U.S.A.* (Washington, New Community Press, 1968), p. 9, reported that there were 10

million people hungry in the U.S. The Chinese figures are 3.5 times the U.S. figures, since they were computed on a straight per capita basis.

3. A large amount of data supporting this thesis has been published in recent years. See Philip Nobile and John Deedy, *The Complete Ecology Fact Book* (Garden City, N.Y., Anchor, 1972) , especially Ch. VII, "Nonrenewable Mineral Resources"; Paul and Anne Ehrlich, *Population, Resources, Environment* (San Francisco, Freeman, 1970); Barry Commoner, *The Closing Circle* (New York, Bantam, 1972); Donella Meadows, et al., *The Limits to Growth* (New York, Signet, 1972).

4. The New York Times, July 10, 1972, p. 45.

5. Based on a Chinese gross national product of \$100 billion, according to the Associated Press; see the *A.P. World Almanac*, 1973. The Chinese per capita GNP, therefore, is about \$133; Brazil's is \$342.

6. See Forbes, Ford, Kendell, and McKenzie, "Nuclear Reactor Safety: An Evaluation of New Evidence," *Nuclear News*, September, 1971. Published by the American Nuclear Society.

7. Much of the information on atomic energy can be found in the carefully researched efforts of the Environmental Coalition on Nuclear Power (3733 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104), especially their "Position Paper on Nuclear Power Plants," August 30, 1971. Their main source of information has been AEC regular bulletins.

8. As quoted by Egan O'Connor, "Radiation Forever, Man Playing God," *Engage*, August 1970, published by the Board of Christian Social Concerns, the United Methodist Church.

For permission to reprint, contact the Social Movement Empowerment Project at 415-412-8640 or email doingdemocracy@igc.org

<P>(Home)