

New Life Style?

By John Shuttleworth

"The dissatisfaction with 'modern' society that the survey takers now talk about is nothing new. We've had it again and again — especially during and after great depressions — since the nation was founded. The unrest usually spawns a 'back to the land' movement that catches fire for a while . . . then times get better and we repeat the cycle all over again."

The man who recently made that statement is Dr. Ralph Borsodi and he knows what he's talking about. Borsodi has been one of the world's leading spokesmen for "decentralist" and "self-sufficient" lifestyles since he himself left New York City for the country. That was in 1908. Today Ralph Borsodi is still one of the foremost champions of this movement.

The decentralist trend that Dr. Borsodi has in mind, however, reaches far beyond the bare-bones subsistence farming practiced by some contemporary "dropouts." If Borsodi has his way, we'll upgrade those subsistence farms into prosperous family enterprises and bind them into a network of small villages that are deeply satisfying places in which to live.

"Well, there's all the evidence in the world that the building of cities is one of the worst mistakes that mankind has ever made. But we are gregarious animals. We really should live in communities of some kind. Communities that are not too large and not too small. Places where, when you walk down the road, everyone says, 'Good morn-

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ing' . . . because everyone knows you. I call such a place a community of 'optimum size.' "

Borsodi has spent a large portion of his life successfully turning his dream into reality.

"I first proved that an individual could live a healthier, more satisfying life on a self-sufficient homestead during the depression of 1921. While millions were tramping the streets of our cities looking for work, my family had plenty of eggs, meat, milk, fruit and vegetables to eat.

"I was a city boy but I learned to milk a cow, churn butter and otherwise operate a largely self-sufficient



seven-acre farm. I even learned to construct stone houses and weave my own suits during that period.

"This activity led me to think about reorganizing society so that thousands of other families could share the independence that my family enjoyed.

"We proved that my ideas would work. By putting them into action, families that had been barely scraping by in New York City were able to purchase a piece of land, build a modern home, produce most of their food and otherwise raise their standard of living."

Like many others, Ralph Borsodi views the future with concern. "The warning flags are up all around us. The energy crisis is interesting to me for this very reason, because, for the first time, the public is getting a faint glimmer of the fact that we're living in the twilight of industrialism.

The crunch is beginning.

"Our highly industrialized network of factories and distribution systems can last only as long as our irreplaceable resources are cheap and available."

What can we do about this rapidly deteriorating state of affairs? "We must change every social and economic institution in the country," says Borsodi. "Switch from a technology of centralization, mass production and money to a technology of decentralization, self-sufficiency and good living. We must learn to supply our energy requirements with windplants and solar collectors instead of petroleum. Raise our food in our own backyards instead of buying it in cans."

For an extensive interview with Dr. Borsodi — in which he describes his self-sufficiency ideas in much greater detail — send a stamped, self-addressed, long envelope to THE MOTHER EARTH NEWS, the Star-News, Washington, D.C. 20003. Ask for the free Reprint No. 186, "Dr. Ralph Borsodi."

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