


NEWS



LETTER

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

Loyal Jones • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Looking Forward

December 26-31: Christmas Country Dance School, Berea College, Berea, Ky. 40404.

December 26-January 1: Winter dance week (Laura Sprung, coordinator), John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, N.C. 28902.

March 29-31: Appalachian Studies Conference—"The Impact of Institutions in Appalachia"—Berea College. Papers and other presentations will reflect the stated theme in relation to such areas as religion, environment, education, handicrafts, politics, literature. For details write Anne Campbell, Appalachian Collection, University of Kentucky Libraries, Lexington, Ky. 40506.

April 11-13: Fourth annual New River symposium, sponsored by the New River Gorge National River of the National Park Service, joined this year by the West Virginia Department of Culture and History; Pipestem State Park, Pipestem, W.Va. A serious conference for those interested in any aspect of the New River—physical or social—"from its North Carolina headwaters down to its mouth in West Virginia." Information from William E. Cox, P.O. Drawer V, Oak Hill, W.Va. 25901. The proceedings of the three previous symposia are now available (at \$12.50 each) from the same address; these are wonderful sources of facts about everything from Wythe County iron furnaces to the role played by the black fly in the ecology of the New River.

April 18-20: "Folklife and the Public Sector," a national conference focusing "on the dual themes of assessment and prognosis," Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Ky. 42101. For more information, you can get in touch with Burt Feintuch at WKU; you may even be in time to submit a proposal for a presentation.

June 24-29: Ninth annual Appalachian Celebration, Morehead State University, Morehead, Ky. 40351. Music, dance, food and crafts, plus lectures throughout the week by scholar in residence Cratis Williams. For complete information, contact the Appalachian Development Center at MSU.

June 28-30: Third annual conference and workshop of the Appalachian Writers Association, Morehead State University. Visiting editors, publishers and authors are expected to be on hand. More information from Garry Barker, UPO 907, Morehead State University, Morehead, Ky. 40351.

Jobs From Wood?

Winifred Pizzano, federal cochairman of the Appalachian Regional Commission, has a way of being very direct when she says something. "Increased exports mean jobs," she observed recently, "and that is the name of the game."

The point was made at a conference at which ARC, undaunted by widespread criticism in the press of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway as a colossal boondoggle and a creature that could be sired only by the U.S. Congress, lent its support to the waterway, culminating a six-month study by ARC on the potential for expanded export of Appalachian wood products. The hope is that the waterway, which is scheduled to open in February, will make foreign markets newly accessible to the Southeast. The ARC believes that this development may have a substantial impact on the economy of the Appalachian region. "Wood products," said Mississippi Senator Thad Cochran, "could be the one industry to lead this part of the country out of the economic doldrums."

If these good things materialize, the critics of the Tenn-Tom, as the waterway is known, may be forced to have second thoughts. They will surely be watching.

Why TVA Failed

JANE JACOBS

(The following article is the first of what we plan as a series of occasional pieces of analysis and commentary on important topics of region-wide interest, presented in order to stimulate a fresh look at these subjects. We invite readers to send us suggestions for future articles, which may come from books or magazines or be previously unpublished. The present article is excerpted from The New York Review of Books; it appeared in the issue of May 10, 1984.)

The conventional prescription for poor or backward nations or regions is "industrial development." This seems a logical remedy for their plight since any economy that lacks industry must either go without

manufactured goods or else, to an absurd degree, import almost everything its people require, paying with one or a few kinds of cash crops or resource exports....

[T]wo conventional strategies [are] used singly or in combination: attempts are made to attract transplanted factories from elsewhere; and ambitious programs are launched to build up major industrial facilities usually, except in the case of rich oil producers, financed by credits or grants. At first thought, both strategies seem admirably to the point. What could be more straightforward? Unfortunately, in practice, they work miserably.

...[T]he cause of these failures goes deeper than poor planning, recessions, the price of oil, political miscalculations, corruption, greed, and so on. At their root is a terrible intellectual failure, for the prescribed strategies themselves are foredoomed to produce disappointment, futility, and debacles. The germane prescription is more roundabout. What backward, stunted economies lack is productive cities that can replace their imports—and enough such cities. This is the lack that makes such economies stunted in the first place. Overcoming it is the only cure for what ails them. This is so because productive cities, containing proliferations of diverse, symbiotic producers, are the only types of settlements capable of replacing wide ranges of their imports with local production in a practical, economical fashion....

Enter Taiwan

Almost never, it seems, have creative, import-replacing cities arisen upon a foundation of transplanted industries. However, the experience of Taiwan suggests that this is not impossible. The events behind Taiwan's unusual, perhaps even unique, achievement go back to 1956 when the government there introduced a program called Land to the Tiller. Its purpose, not in itself unusual, was to transfer agricultural soil from the ownership of feudal-like landlords to the peasants who worked the land. The government attached a string to its payments to expropriated landlords, a string that tended to convert them into city capitalists. In part, the land payments were to be invested in light industry. The question of what kinds and where the industries were to be was left up to the former landlords, as long as the investments were in Taiwan. The place most investors chose was Taipei, the capital and largest city...

At this time, Taiwan was receiving light-industry transplants, such as factories making toys, radios, clothing, and kitchen utensils, from distant places, mostly from America, its big attraction for these being its cheap labor. Taiwan continued receiving transplants, but in the meantime something very different was happening. Taiwanese who had gotten jobs in transplanted industries had learned from that experience how the enterprises were set up and run. In Taipei, these experiences and skills were now being combined with indigenous capital and ownership as people who had first gained experience in transplants were hired to manage new workshops and small factories—assembling radios, making blouses, sandals, tea kettles, kaleidoscopes, flashlights, custom jewelry, and the like.

Some of the young enterprises took on subcontract work for exporters in Hong Kong. Others went into competition with foreign transplants, but since they were anything but self-sufficient, they improvised by getting outsiders—local workshops—to help them out. In this way the new enterprises not only stimulated more work for already existing local shops, but caused the formation of new ones which ramified and multiplied. And in this way, as fast as new economic niches opened up, Taipei was developing a real foundation for symbiotic and versatile production. The nests of interacting enterprises became capable not only of supplying one another, and exporters as well, but also of replacing sewing machines, plastics, molds and dies, industrial cutlery, glue, electric motors, lathes, printing equipment, and many other kinds of producer goods being imported, as well as various consumer goods.

As a significant import-replacing city, which Taipei had become by the early 1970s, the city boomed....

At best, however, opportunities for doing what Taiwan did are very limited elsewhere, for the hard reason that transplants are not very plentiful. This situation is growing worse as even stagnant northern American cities have taken to competing desperately at attracting ready-made industry. Demand for transplants far outruns their supply. To put it another way, passive or moribund economies are all too abundant, and vigorous, import-replacing cities too scant.

This is ominous, because no substitutes in economic life for such cities exist, even though the most elaborate and expensive efforts have been made to overcome regional poverty and passivity without them. Those alternative approaches don't work.

The TVA Story

Consider, in this light, the history of the TVA, perhaps the most famous project for regional development undertaken in modern times....The region presided over by TVA, the watershed of the Tennessee River, embraces parts of Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi....

The region contained an ample sprinkling of poor market and service towns and a few more impressive places, which were known as cities but which were little more than administrative, educational, or transportation and distribution centers, producing little. Neither the poverty of the economy nor its backwardness is actually surprising when we recognize that the entire region lacked an import-replacing city and never had had one.

Starting in 1933, the TVA began—or so it seemed—with everything at once, rapidly, energetically, and efficiently. At the heart of its planning was, of course, construction of its magnificent dams for controlling floods, improving river navigation, producing electricity, and, as a bonus from the reservoirs, providing waterfronts for recreational use and for drawing tourists and their money into the region. The electricity was to be used,

Jane Jacobs has specialized for a number of years in writing about cities and what makes them tick. Background for her concept of the "import-replacing city" can be found, for instance, in her book The Economy of Cities (1969).

IDEALISTS: The men who made up TVA's first board of directors had different ideas, but each dreamed of regional betterment. From l.: Arthur E. Morgan, Harcourt Morgan, David Lilienthal.



among other things, for manufacturing fertilizer and to supply farms with power.... The electricity was also intended to attract transplantable industries and so redress the region's lack of balance between manufacturing and agriculture. All this was calculated to produce not only a well-rounded but a self-sustaining economy....

Remarkably swiftly the fertility of leached, eroded, and misused farmland was restored, barren hillsides reforested, floods brought under control, roads built, hookworm and malaria eradicated... The industrial strategy worked brilliantly too, for as fast as electricity became available, TVA sought out and found industrial transplants. Voracious users of power led the way...

The Electric Asset

Although so much had been accomplished in the first decade while the region was being remade, much poverty remained. This had not seemed too serious at first. Given the fact that so much had improved so swiftly, much else was excused on grounds that the scheme was still young. It was more or less taken for granted that economic diversification and expansion... would continue further under its own momentum. But this didn't happen, owing to the absence of a vigorous city or cities, right there in the region. At the hub of it all was merely the sleepy little city of Knoxville, Tennessee... Knoxville remained innocent of ramifying nests of symbiotic city enterprises, and so did all the other settlements. Plenty of imports were coming into the region, huge quantities and varieties of them, but few indeed were being replaced with local production.

No significant numbers and kinds of new city jobs were therefore turning up in the region. How could they, in the absence of even a single export-generating and import-replacing city? Far from producing amply and diversely for its own people and producers as well as for others, the region continued to depend on importing almost everything or else going without....

[B]y default, the region had to depend ever more heavily upon the one great asset it did possess, the capacity to produce electric power. That wasn't enough. The lack of city jobs, and of production for local use, told....

Because of realities such as these, and because the

region has not been generating other kinds of export work and yet must import heavily or go without, the TVA has had no other choice than to concentrate on producing and selling electricity. Directly and indirectly, this asset underpinned the entire region and its standard of living. Therefore, from 1945 on, the authority concentrated on production of electricity to hold poverty at bay as best it could. During the decade between 1945 and 1955, production of electric power doubled. It doubled again in the next decade; doubled yet again in the next. The plan for 1975-1985 called for another doubling still, but this would not be possible. In sum, once the region had attained its early illusory look of a well-rounded economy, with every passing decade it became economically more and more unbalanced.

The expansion of power production soon outran the capacities of the dams. So the authority added immense coal-fired generators; by 1970, 80 percent of the total electric power was being generated by coal.... Unlike sugar cane or nickel, electricity can be produced one way or another almost anywhere. Therefore TVA's one great asset has not been electricity per se, but cheap electricity. Cost is central....

The coal the authority bought came principally from suppliers who strip-mined in the mountains of Kentucky and West Virginia. The scale and ruthlessness of the strip mining were fully in keeping with the prodigious power production the coal fed.... For as long as it could, the authority resisted legislation, regulations, court actions, and public pressure aimed at requiring its suppliers to repair their depredations; reclamation would raise the price of coal, hence the price of electricity TVA could offer transplanted industries....

The region's own grotesque economy... is reaching the end of the line with respect to what can be done by specializing in an outstanding asset. The next stage in its history will most likely be the usual stagnation and gradually deepening poverty of a region that has gone as far as it can go economically with a passive and stunted economy....

People who remember the early TVA and then observe what it has become may think of the scheme as having been betrayed in some fashion. But the legendary TVA and the later TVA are one and the same. The results were ordained by the lack of an import-replacing city. Nothing else... could make up for that lack.... ■

Hurry!

The Bureau of Florida Folklife Programs is in eager pursuit of two folklife field workers, who will be concerned with documenting folk culture in the St. Johns river basin area of northeast Florida; the project will take about two months, and the chosen two will go to work early in January. If you're interested, there's no time to lose; contact Blanton Owen at the bureau; the address is P.O. Box 265, White Springs, Fla. 32096—or you can call 904/397-2192.

EYE on Publications

Machine Dreams, by Jayne Anne Phillips (Dutton). A first novel by the highly praised writer of the short-story collection *Black Tickets*. *Machine Dreams* is the story of a West Virginia family, not coal miners or holler dwellers but small-town middle class; most particularly, it is the story of a mother and daughter. And intruding among all the standard kinds of evils and inadequacies is a villain from the outside world—the Vietnam War. "This wonderful young writer," says Nadine Gordimer, "has penetrated the definitive experience of her generation."

Kentucky Place Names, by Robert M. Rennick (University Press of Kentucky). From Monkeys Eyebrow to Mossy Bottom, through Pippa Passes and over Beaver Dam, they're all here in their limitless variety. Feeling down in the dumps? Maybe it's just that you're from Crummies. Suffering from a weak ego? Try moving away from Dwarf. Furious? Let yourself go in Stamping Ground. Or, on the other hand, perhaps you're Lovely and full of Wisdom and dwell in Fancy Farm. The author, who is the coordinator of the Kentucky Place Name Survey (affiliated with the Place Name Survey of the United States), faced the daunting task of identifying and locating the estimated 100,000 named places that have existed in Kentucky; from this abundance he has chosen 2,000 for description and comment in the present book—a bonanza for historians, linguists, geographers, folklorists, genealogists and people who are simply nuts about names.

Youghiogheny: Appalachian River, by Tim Palmer (University of Pittsburgh Press). The author, a Pennsylvania writer and photographer, just loves to explore

ivers. This time he begins in extreme western Maryland, at the West Virginia border, with "a spring measuring one foot across, two inches deep," and traces his subject, "one of the finest wild and scenic rivers in the eastern United States," down through its hills and valleys to McKeesport, Pa., where it joins the Monongahela. The river is said to offer some of the best water for everybody from expert kayakers to gentle-water paddlers. (It's also probably the leading tongue-twister among rivers; we're thinking of offering a prize to the person who sends us the best suggested pronunciation of its name.)

The Journal of Kentucky Studies (Northern Kentucky University). The first issue of a new annual publication from the NKU Department of History and Geography, edited by David S. Payne; it's divided into sections of poetry, fiction, history and commentary, and oral history. The contributors come from all over the Commonwealth and even beyond its borders, but appearing among them are such old Appalachia hands as James Still, Jim Wayne Miller and Gurney Norman.

Past Titan Rock, by Ellesa Clay High (University Press of Kentucky). In 1977 the author spent an afternoon interviewing Lily May Ledford, who in the 1930s was the lead performer of radio's Coon Creek Girls. But this acquaintanceship didn't end there; the interview was, in fact, the beginning of a four years' stay for Ms. High in Kentucky's famous Red River Gorge, and the result is this rediscovery and re-creation of a hundred years of life in these hills, presented in a blend of oral history, fiction and reflection.

Industrialization and Southern Society 1877-1984, by James C. Cobb (University Press of Kentucky). Ever since the Civil War failed to end satisfactorily, the South has experienced a persistent desire to achieve success by developing an industrial economy. This book, a volume in the publisher's New Perspectives on the South series, traces the history of this yearning and analyzes its results, from the New South sermons of Henry W. Grady to today's Sun Belt industrial promoters. "For all its apparent impact," says the author, "industrialization has not obliterated the socioeconomic and structural differences that have traditionally represented the fundamental basis of southern distinctiveness"; it has served "both as an agent of change and as a buttress for the status quo." (For other thoughts about the limitations of industrialization in the South, see "Why TVA Failed" beginning on page 1 of this NEWSLETTER.)

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