

# Self Sufficiency In The Ark

by Craig MacPhail

In Texas, on the border to Mexico, John Todd described a small commune where the participants were interested in redefining human relationship and community. But they still found that for their water, power, food and structure they were still dependant on the society they were against.

Todd stated that despite their attempt to help the group, a group of scientists were unable to help the commune become self sufficient. 'In aggregate we didn't have the knowledge to lead to true stewardship... but then other people have had the knowledge before.'

This situation was one of the things that led to Todd founding The New Alchemy Institute in 1969; an institute whose purpose is to develop a new perception of our society through developing lifestyles and technology that would lead to stewardship of our environment.

The New Alchemy Institute maintains that our planet is suffering from too many years of exploitation; of women, native peoples and the environment. Todd said we need to develop an ecological view where we perceive our world as a living system.

This type of view of our society has developed from the emergence of a number of small groups all trying to reform elements of society. In the 1950's the civil rights were the vanguard in suggesting that something was essentially wrong with modern society. This was carried on by the protestors to the Viet Nam War and the proponents of the Women's Liberation Movement. Todd stated that these groups are trying to change how we perceive ourselves when what is needed is a radical transformation; and entire change of our society.

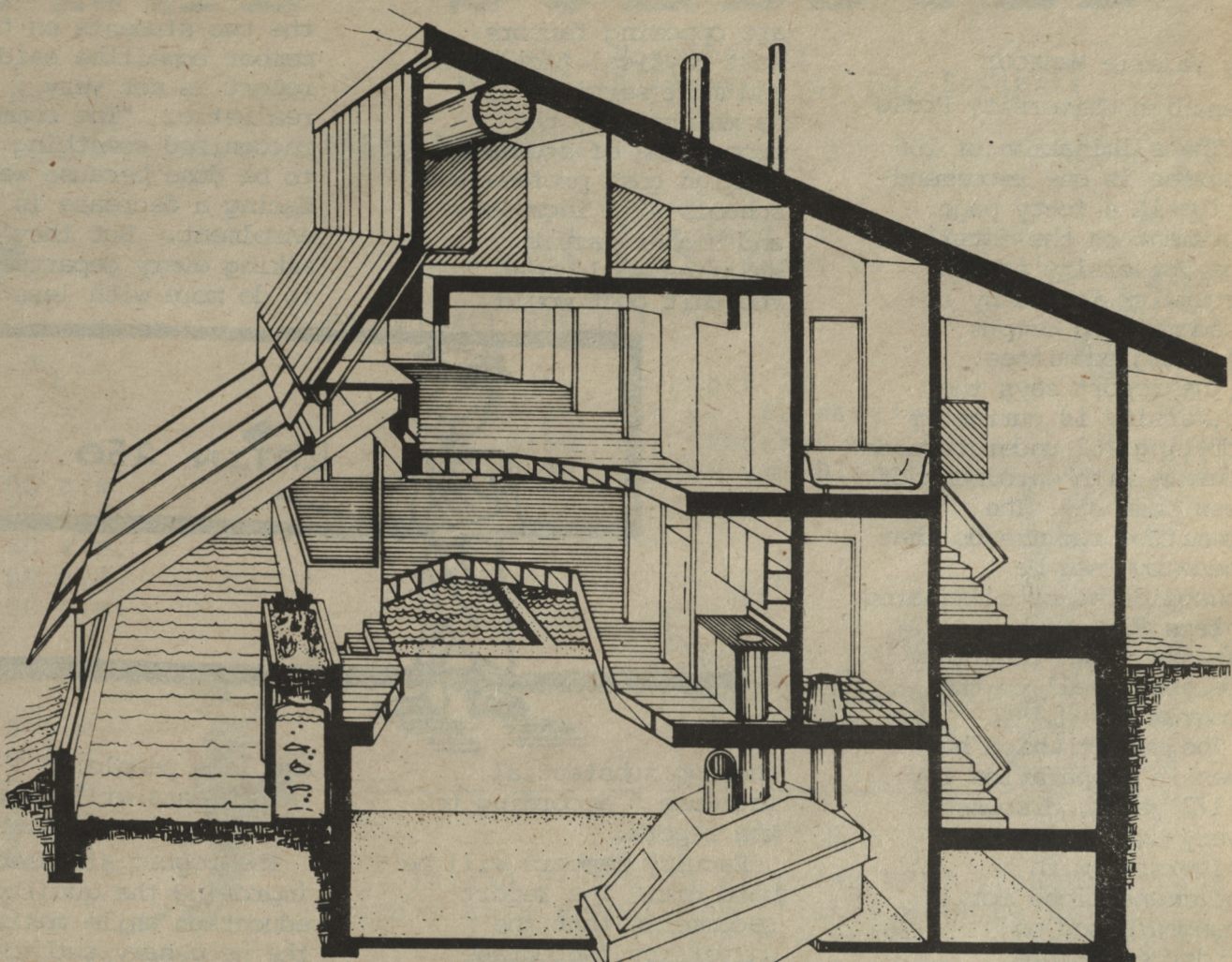
The institute has set up seven guidelines to channel our society from a maladaptive to an adaptive society. Todd found that most societies in the past were maladaptive they were unable to redefine their goals and purposes.

Their main guideline advocates more participation. 'The technology that sustains us we should participate in,' Todd stated. He cited the large bodies of petroleum and nuclear technology that have gotten out of the realm of the understanding of the large body of every day society. Buckminster Fuller, the famous designer and advocate of ecology once said 'We would be spectators in our own future,' if we did not get a grasp of what is happening in science and technology.

The scale of things should be reduced Todd noted as one of the guidelines. He pointed out that the growth of things in a society are a sign of its decline. they get to the point that the human being is dwarfed, using the example of institutions and architecture.

'Our future should be predicated on sun, wind and bio-fuels', is one of the guidelines put forward by the New Alchemy Institute. As with nature they believe that humans should work with what they have. Regarding nuclear energy Todd stated; 'there is no way fallible human beings can create and infallible technology.'

Living equivalents should be found for those processes now done by machinery is another guideline. Researchers at the Ark, a project the group has set up in Prince Edward Island, found out that by setting up a correct miniature bio-ecology in indoor fish farms they



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could be managed without the use of pumps, filters or other machinery.

They also found that the tanks the farms were set up in could produce heat. Thirty-two of these 'living furnaces' are used in the Ark and produce five billion BTU's (British Thermal Units) of heat. As well they will harvest approximately 50,000 trout from the farms this year.

The New Alchemy Institute states that they should not look at regions in terms of 'have and have not.' Every region should be judged as a specific bio system that should be 'the well spring for design.'

They also believe that the planet's needs should come first. 'Every stream, river and hill should be given priority before we pull apart the threads of the tapestry that is Earth.'

The New Alchemy Institute has a number of research projects set up around the world. The best known one in Canada is 'the Ark' in Prince Edward Island. The Ark is a model of a self sufficient shelter. It uses sun wind and bio fuels to heat and power the structure and produces fish and produce for food as well as for the market.

The Ark was built by the institute as a multi disciplinary project between 55 scientists. They had the help of volunteers from Europe and southern California. The total cost of building the Ark was \$357,000, \$130,000 of that was in materials. Todd pointed out that the cost of building the Ark was high because it was an initial project, other types of arks could be built for much less money.

The Ark found that they could produce trout from their farms cheaper than most commercial outlets. Their flower and food crops have had tremendous production as well. They have shown Todd said that it is possible to erect a community that is totally self sufficient; even in its source of livelihood.

John Todd pointed out that those who think that the future is hopeless are playing a fool's game. He maintains that if we attempt to reroute out society along more ecologically sound lines the future will be bright.

The UPEI SUN received the above article from the "Ontarion", the University of Guelph student paper. The John Todd lecture was one in a series sponsored by the college.

# 'A Wee Bit 'O Irish' In The Barn

Traditional and contemporary Irish folk music was the order of the evening when Mike O'Connor visited "The Exchange" last Wednesday evening. (Nov. 8) Irish music is commonly identified with rowdy beer-swinging pubs! Yet Mike quite effectively conveyed, through his songs, a concern for what Irish music is also meant to represent. Such themes as war, poverty, death, the lives of forgotten people, lonely people and the need for brotherhood; all serve to express, through music, a message

from a people whose laughter often hides the scars of much suffering. Each of these themes shares as much a part in the history of Irish folk music as the other themes, which set your foot stomping and your toes tapping!

The selection of songs Mike chose for the evening was to represent an effective blending of these two predominant trends in Irish music. "The Streets of London", "They Will Know we are Brothers", "Land of the Dance", "Galway City,"

"Galway Bay", "It's Never Too Late", are mere examples from his collection.

Even if you haven't got 'a wee bit of Irish' in you, I'm sure Mike O'Connor's music would still tickle your fancy! Al is eager to have him back for a return visit early in the next semester.

"The Exchange Coffee Shop" is open every Wednesday evening between 8:00 and 11:30. Besides the featured entertainment there is also an endless

supply of coffee, tea, hot chocolate and cookies available. This week (Nov. 12) "The Exchange" featured the fine music of Steve Skutt, Bert Tersteeg and Rick Tersteeg. Drop in for a visit and bring along a friend.

Finally, special thanks are extended on behalf of Al, to Mike; to Gordon, John and Roger; to Mary; and to the girls at Beaver Foods cafeteria in the Barn. See you next week.

Alan