THE LAND

INHABITING IT IN PRINCIPLE & PRACTICE

LAND USE -- "PROGRESS & GROWTH"

The plain fact of the matter is that our land and our water and our atmosphere are being wrecked, ruined, poisoned, washed and blown away-paved over, clearcut, turned into trash, uglified in many ways. The process is called progress and growth and just about everybody seems to be convinced that it has to be that way in order that there can be enough jobs to provide the income necessary to have access to the necessities of life. Land is regarded as private property which may be disposed of pretty much any way the owner pleases. If it's marshland he can drain it, whether it affects the natural regimes of the region or not. If it's forest he can clear it. If it's meadow or farmland he can "develop" it. If it takes political power to obtain favorable zoning then he brings power to bear.

"Land use decisions are increasingly becoming the most critical choice elected officials make... large landowners exercise enormous political clout... the Lt. Governor owns 23,000 acres... Weyerhaeuser owns 599,770. Land developers, realtors and contractors gave more money to North Carolina politicians than all the campaign contributions made by manufacturers; they gave more than all the doctors or utilities or banks." (These quotes come from a study done by the Institute for Southern Studies in Durham NC, WHO OWNS NORTH CAROLINA?)

An eloquent writer and speaker of the subject of justice in the way land is owned and used is John Hart, of Carroll College in Helena, Montana. His book THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH: A THEOLOGY OF THE LAND and other writings and films establish that reputation. Professor Hart brings to his study of land ownership and use a deep scholarship in the American heritage from Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson through governmental acts all through the nineteenth and early twentieth century aimed at increasing the numbers of family size holdings. He knows thoroughly the traditions of the Native Americans and their consternation over the buying and selling of something nobody can own.

The idea of this conference is for participants to get a good understanding of what John Hart stands for on Friday night through his lecture, and through the responses and ensuing discussion (participants should have read his book). Saturday morning and afternoon will be devoted to examining Hart's views and trying to write up a statement of what we think about them. This will be achieved through workshops conducted on two tracks: theology and ethics; and the practicality of suggested reforms. Everybody gets a sayso. Writers will try to produce a statement that reflects the mind of each of the workshops. Workshops get repeated so that everybody gets exposed to both.

THE CONFERENCE KEYNOTER

John Hart Ph. D. did his doctoral work in Christian ethics at Union Theological Seminary in New York. He has done postdoctoral study at Harvard on Religion and Cultural Change. He has done other graduate study in economics and psychology, history and literature. He is the author of THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH: A Theology of the Land, a book which provides theological perspective for examining the way our society mistreats our land along with some solid recommendations as to how that might be corrected. Hart is extremely well qualified to lecture on the subject of how we own and use the land... and to give an opinion on how we ought to inhabit it with due respect for it and all its members and to succeeding generations. He has published articles in many papers, prepared films which have been shown on Public TV, done the principal work in preparing a pastoral letter for the Catholic bishops of the Midwest which dealt with the way land in that area should be respected and nurtured. It achieved wide dissemination under the name STRANGERS AND GUESTS. He has made a long time study of Native American religion and philosophy of the land and has defended Indian rights in international forums. Forty three invitational lectures appear in his list of credits.

THE SATURDAY NIGHT SPEAKER

Bob Hall - Founder of the Institute for Southern Studies, and of the prize winning magazine Southern Exposure. He visited all 100 North Carolina county courthouses in assembling the information for the book WHO OWNS NORTH CAROLINA? Bob Hall is a North Carolina and a Southern institution. He has raised consciousness in this state and throughout the South on a hundred different justice issues. He has worked closely with civil rights leaders all through the years. Julian Bond has long been an articulate supporter of the Institute and Chair of the Board of Directors. The magazine Southern Exposure has featured issues dealing with every subject you can think of. Racism, work from the standpoint of the factory or the agricultural worker, the black worker, the major labor issues, the military presence in the South, women, sports, politics, and political corruption. Bob Hall is a true Southern hero doing what ought to be done by way of recognizing the true beauty of the South and revealing the ugliness. Whatever land reform comes about in North Carolina, Bob Hall will have done much to get it under way.
WORKSHOP LEADERS

Anthony Hecker - Taught theology at Fairfield College Connecticut. Refers to himself as a Jesuit and a married priest.

Clayton Stainaker - Associate Professor of Religion and Philosophy at NC State University. Speaks widely on ethics and theology.

Bill Dow - Farmer.

Jeffrey Smith - He has achieved prominence in the study of Community Land Trusts and the Henry George school of land taxation.

RESOURCE PERSONS AND ADVISORS

Roger Corless - Professor of Religion, Duke U. Specialist in Christian-Buddhist Studies. He will be a responder to John Hart's lecture.

Wallace Kaufman - Realtor, Developer, well known commentator on the N.C. ecological scene. He will be a responder on Friday night also.

Bill Dow - N.C. organic farmer and agricultural intellectual. He will be a responder Friday evening.

Paul Luebke - Professor, Sociology Department, UNC Greensboro. Analyzes N.C. politics.

Nadia Saad - She works for the World Bank in Washington. Her interests are ecological.

John Hartwell - Orange County Commissioner. Green activist.

Evelyn Mattern - N.C. Council of Churches lobbyist.

Gerald Alonzo Smith - Economist at Mankato State University, MN. He gave advice but may not come.

Dan Graham - Graduate Student - Politics.

Amy Hannon - Green & Bioregional organizer.


Bill Halman - One of N.C.’s most skilled and effective lobbyists. He lobbies for the earth.

Jane Sharp - Noted N.C. earth activist.

Marvin Maller - Western N.C. bioregional activist. An editor of Kitaah, the voice of Southern Appalachie.

Cary Fowler - Program director Rural Advancement Fund.

THE PROGRAM

FRIDAY

4:30 PM Registration opens.

6:00 Dinner - Meals will be 7:45 AM, 12 Noon, and 6:00 PM. Vegetarian.


SATURDAY

7:45 AM Breakfast

9:00 Section One: Professional theologians and ethicists. Anthony Hecker and Clayton Stainaker will lead. Indian wise man and teacher. Roger Corless will be available and John Hart will visit as he chooses.

Section Two: Jeffrey Smith and, we hope, Bill Dow will talk about reforms that can work. Bob Hall may also help. Paul Luebke, John Hartwell and Nadia Saad will help. Bob Hall will be present.

11:15 Plenary.

12 Noon Lunch.

1:30 Morning workshops will be repeated exchanging attendance.

3:30 Plenary until 4:30. Free afterwards.

6:00 Evening meal.

7:15 Plenary session. Bob Hall will relate his experiences in writing the book WHO OWNS NORTH CAROLINA?

8:30 A Celebration of the Earth. This will follow Native American Custom.

Writers will consolidate the four workshop statements sometime Saturday evening.

SUNDAY

9:00 AM Plenary session. Writers will present their statement for discussion and debate and amendment. We hope for an agreed statement representative of the mind of the conference.

10:30 Evaluation.

11:00 Closing Ceremony.

12:00 Lunch.

CAMP NEW HOPE

Camp New Hope, located on NC 86 north of Chapel Hill, lies nestled among 165 acres of rolling pine and hardwood forest. This retreat conference center has two freshwater lakes, basketball and volleyball courts, nature trails, and boasts many other recreational facilities for individuals, families, and groups of 200 or more in the rustic cabins. An excellent kitchen staff, provides delicious meals in the modern dining hall.

Camp New Hope is 7.5 miles from Chapel Hill and 3.5 miles from the intersection of NC 86 and I-85.

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