

#1 Bestseller

The . Greening of America

There is a révolution coming. It will not be like révolutions of the past. It will originate with the individual and with culture, and it will change the political structure only as its final act. It will not require violence to succeed, and it cannot be successfully resisted by violence. This is the révolution of the new génération.

Charles A. Reich

The Greening of America

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A NATIONAL GENERAL COMPANY

THE PEOPLE SPEAK!
EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS RECEIVED BY THE AUTHOR:

"For the first time I began to understand the reason behind some of my 18-year-old son's views which had heretofore perplexed and worried me. But, more important, it reinforced my once passionate, long-denied feeling that each human being was important."

—Mrs. Alfred Cosmann,
Great Neck, New York

"Thank you for such a remarkably perceptive and brilliant explanation of the United States my husband and I are trying to understand and feel so frustrated about most of the time. I am now hopeful and eager to contribute more than letter-writing to Nixon and Senators; but to actually take part."

—Mrs. Frederick Anderson,
Pipersville, Pennsylvania

"**GREENING OF AMERICA** is the most truth in one place that I have seen in a long, long time."

—William M. Mack,
Guilford, Connecticut

"As a teacher on her 47th year of teaching young people, I cannot thank you enough . . . I've always had beautiful students but today's are something else! I have a feeling it's truly spectacular I should have lived long enough to know these fine children!"

—Mary Gwen Owen,
Macalester College,
St. Paul, Minnesota

"It has been devastating to feel the mechanics of our lives continuing to strangle us because resistance to ideas—any ideas—is inherent in the system. But you make us see that the 'great leap' is already being taken. And we thank you."

—Audrey Hoyt Johnson,
Ojai, California

"You have defined our situation with a clarity I would not have thought possible, and our relationship to our society in a manner which allows us to entertain alternatives we had long ago discarded as romantic . . . You have confronted the problem so honestly and made your argument so beautifully that I am moved beyond words. I write this letter less for your gratification than my own—a piece of evidence that at thirty-six, five kids, two dogs, things all around, it is possible to begin. This letter commits me somehow."

—Mrs. Edward M. Post,
Louisville, Kentucky

"Right on. You've managed to put into words what we have known for a long time."

—The Folks at Wheeler Ranch

"Your book is so important, I think, that the extent to which it is recognized will be an exact indication of whether or not we will pull through, whether or not the culture will realize that it has no choice but integrity, whether we will have reality or extinction. What you know is what Wallace Stevens knew when he wrote 'The rock cannot be broken. It is the truth.' You have illuminated our world with grace and meaning, and I thank you."

—Francis G. Couvares,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

"You have produced the first statement of the condition here in America that feels true. Please write more and publish **THE GREENING** in paperback form for [some] high school teachers to disseminate."

—Mrs. Peter Stenzel,
Portland, Oregon

"It seems to me that you have traced the history of, and set forth the present depth of our predicament in a way that, as far as I know, has not existed before."

—Robert L. Anthony,
Moylan, Pennsylvania

This is the Revolution:

This land is your land,
this land is my land,
from California
to the New York Island*

—WOODY GUTHRIE

Come on people now
Smile on your brother
Everybody get together
Try to love one another right now

—CHET POWERS,
FOR THE YOUNGBLOODS

There is not any haunt of prophecy,
Nor any old chimera of the grave,
Neither the golden underground, nor isle
Melodious, where spirits gat them home,
Nor visionary south, nor cloudy palm
Remote on heaven's hill, that has endured
As April's green endures; or will endure

—WALLACE STEVENS

* "This Land Is Your Land," words and music by Woody Guthrie TRO copyright © 1956, 1958 Ludlow Music, Inc. New York, N.Y. Used by permission.

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I

THE COMING AMERICAN REVOLUTION

America is dealing death, not only to people in other lands, but to its own people. So say the most thoughtful and passionate of our youth, from California to Connecticut. This realization is not limited to the new generation. Talk to a retired school teacher in Mendocino, a judge in Washington, D.C., a housewife in Belmont, Massachusetts, a dude rancher in the Washington Cascades. We think of ourselves as an incredibly rich country, but we are beginning to realize that we are also a desperately poor country—poor in most of the things that throughout the history of mankind have been cherished as riches.

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There is a revolution coming. It will not be like revolutions of the past. It will originate with the individual and with culture, and it will change the political structure only as its final act. It will not require violence to succeed, and it cannot be successfully resisted by violence. It is now spreading with amazing rapidity, and already our laws, institutions and social structure are changing in consequence. It promises a higher reason, a more human community, and a new and liberated individual. Its ultimate creation will be a new and enduring wholeness and beauty—a renewed relationship of man to himself, to other men, to society, to nature, and to the land.

This is the revolution of the new generation. Their protest and rebellion, their culture, clothes, music, drugs, ways of thought, and liberated life-style are not a passing fad or a form of dissent and refusal, nor are they in any sense irrational. The whole emerging pattern, from ideals to campus demonstrations to beads and bell bottoms to the Woodstock Festival, makes sense and is part of a consistent philosophy. It is both necessary and inevitable, and in time it will include not only youth, but all people in America.

The logic and necessity of the new generation—and what they are so furiously opposed to—must be seen against a background of what has gone wrong in America. It must be understood in light of the betrayal and loss of the American dream, the rise of the Corporate State of the 1960's, and the way in which that State dominates, exploits, and ultimately destroys both nature and man. Its rationality must be measured against the insanity of existing "reason"—reason that makes impoverishment, dehumaniza-

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tion, and even war appear to be logical and necessary. Its logic must be read from the fact that Americans have lost control of the machinery of their society, and only new values and a new culture can restore control. Its emotions and spirit can be comprehended only by seeing contemporary America through the eyes of the new generation.

The meaning and the future of the revolution emerge from a perspective on America. The revolution is a movement to bring man's thinking, his society, and his life to terms with the revolution of technology and science that has already taken place. Technology demands of man a new mind—a higher, transcendent reason—if it is to be controlled and guided rather than to become an unthinking monster. It demands a new individual responsibility for values, or it will dictate all values. And it promises a life that is more liberated and more beautiful than any man has known, if man has the courage and the imagination to seize that life.

The transformation that is coming invites us to re-examine our own lives. It confronts us with a personal and individual choice: are we satisfied with how we have lived; how would we live differently? It offers us a recovery of self. It faces us with the fact that this choice cannot be evaded, for as the freedom is already there, so must the responsibility be there.

At the heart of everything is what we shall call a change of consciousness. This means a "new head"—a new way of living—a new man. This is what the new generation has been searching for, and what it has started achieving. Industrialism produced a new man, too—one adapted to the demands of the ma-

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chine. In contrast, today's emerging consciousness seeks a new knowledge of what it means to be human, in order that the machine, having been built, may now be turned to human ends; in order that man once more can become a creative force, renewing and creating his own life and thus giving life back to his society.

It is essential to place the American crisis and this change within individuals in a philosophic perspective, showing how we got to where we are, and where we are going. Current events are so overwhelming that we only see from day to day, merely responding to each crisis as it comes, seeing only immediate evils, and seeking inadequate solutions such as merely ending the war, or merely changing our domestic priorities. A longer-range view is necessary.

What is the nature of the present American crisis? Most of us see it as a collection of problems, not necessarily related to each other, and, although profoundly troubling, nevertheless within the reach of reason and reform. But if we list these problems, not according to topic, but as elements of larger issues concerning the structure of our society itself, we can see that the present crisis is an organic one, that it arises out of the basic premises by which we live and that no mere reform can touch it.

1. *Disorder, corruption, hypocrisy, war.* The front pages of newspapers tell of the disintegration of the social fabric, and the resulting atmosphere of anxiety and terror in which we all live. Lawlessness is most often associated with crime and riots, but there is lawlessness and corruption in all the major institu-

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tions of our society—matched by an indifference to responsibility and consequences, and a pervasive hypocrisy that refuses to acknowledge the facts that are everywhere visible. Both lawlessness and evasion found expression in the Vietnam War, with its unprincipled destruction of everything human, and its random, indifferent, technological cruelty.

2. *Poverty, distorted priorities, and law-making by private power.* America presents a picture of ~~drastic~~ poverty amid affluence, an extremity of contrast unknown in other industrial nations. Likewise there is a superabundance of some goods, services, and activities such as defense manufacture, while other needs, such as education and medical care, are at a starvation level for many. These closely related kinds of inequality are not the accidents of a free economy, they are intentionally and rigidly built into the laws of our society by those with powerful influence; an example is the tax structure which subsidizes private wealth and production of luxuries and weapons at the direct expense of impoverished people and impoverished services. The nation has a planned economy, and the planning is done by the exercise of private power without concern for the general good.

3. *Uncontrolled technology and the destruction of environment.* Technology and production can be great benefactors of man, but they are mindless instruments; if undirected they roll along with a momentum of their own. In our country they 'pulverize everything in their path: the landscape, the natural environment, history and tradition, the amenities and civilities, the privacy and spaciousness of life, beauty,

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and the fragile, slow-growing social structures which bind us together. Organization and bureaucracy, which are applications of technology to social institutions, increasingly dictate how we shall live our lives, with the logic of organization taking precedence over any other values.

4. *Decline of democracy and liberty; powerlessness.* The Constitution and Bill of Rights have been weakened, imperceptibly but steadily. The nation has gradually become a rigid managerial hierarchy, with a small elite and a great mass of the disenfranchised. Democracy has rapidly lost ground as power is increasingly captured by giant managerial institutions and corporations, and decisions are made by experts, specialists, and professionals safely insulated from the feelings of the people. Most governmental power has shifted from Congress to administrative agencies, and corporate power is free to ignore both stockholders and consumers. As regulation and administration have grown, liberty has been eroded and bureaucratic discretion has taken the place of the rule of law. Today both dissent and efforts at change are dealt with by repression. The pervasiveness of police, security men, the military, and compulsory military service show the changed character of American liberty.

5. *The artificiality of work and culture.* Work and living have become more and more pointless and empty. There is no lack of meaningful projects that cry out to be done, but our working days are used up in work that lacks meaning: making useless or harmful products, or servicing the bureaucratic struc-

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tures. For most Americans, work is mindless, exhausting, boring, servile, and hateful, something to be endured while "life" is confined to "time off." At the same time our culture has been reduced to the grossly commercial; all cultural values are for sale, and those that fail to make a profit are not preserved. Our life activities have become plastic, vicarious, and false to our genuine needs, activities fabricated by others and forced upon us.

6. *Absence of community.* America is one vast, terrifying anti-community. The great organizations to which most people give their working day, and the apartments and suburbs to which they return at night, are equally places of loneliness and alienation. Modern living has obliterated place, locality, and neighborhood, and given us the anonymous separateness of our existence. The family, the most basic social system, has been ruthlessly stripped to its functional essentials. Friendship has been coated over with a layer of impenetrable artificiality as men strive to live roles designed for them. Protocol, competition, hostility, and fear have replaced the warmth of the circle of affection which might sustain man against a hostile universe.

7. *Loss of self.* Of all of the forms of impoverishment that can be seen or felt in America, loss of self, or death in life, is surely the most devastating. It is, even more than the draft and the Vietnam War, the source of discontent and rage in the new generation. Beginning with school, if not before, an individual is systematically stripped of his imagination, his creativity, his heritage, his dreams, and his

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personal uniqueness, in order to style him into a productive unit for a mass, technological society. Instinct, feeling, and spontaneity are repressed by overwhelming forces. As the individual is drawn into the meritocracy, his working life is split from his home life, and both suffer from a lack of wholeness. Eventually, people virtually become their professions, roles, or occupations, and are thenceforth strangers to themselves. Blacks long ago felt their deprivation of identity and potential for life. But white "soul" and blues are just beginning. Only a segment of youth is articulately aware that they too suffer an enforced loss of self—they too are losing the lives that could be theirs.

What has caused the American system to go wrong in such an organic way? The first crucial fact is the existence of a universal sense of powerlessness. We seem to be living in a society that no one created and that no one wants. The feeling of powerlessness extends even to the inhabitants of executive offices. Yet, paradoxically, it is also a fact that we have available to us the means to begin coping with virtually all of the problems that beset us. Most people would initially deny this, but reflection shows how true it is. We know what causes crime and social disorder, and what can be done to eliminate those causes. We know the steps that can be taken to create greater economic equality. We are in possession of techniques to fashion and preserve more livable cities and environments. Our problems are vast, but so is our store of techniques; it is simply not being put to use.

Urban riots offer a well-documented case in point

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for the late 1960's. They were predictable and they were predicted. Their causes and the appropriate remedies (which include education, housing, and jobs) have been known and described for many years by students of social problems. After the riots took place, a presidential commission reviewed the events, and their findings gave wide publicity to the same knowledge; the commission's recommendations were not acted upon, just as the preexisting knowledge had not been acted upon. Response was either nonexistent, absurdly inadequate, or childishly irrational (such as the proposal to deprive looters of jobs with public agencies).

The American crisis, then, seems clearly to be related to an inability to act. But what is the cause of this paralysis? Why, in the face of every warning, have we been unable to act? Why have we not used our resources more wisely and justly? We tell ourselves that social failure comes down to an individual moral failure: we must have the will to act; we must first find concern and compassion in our hearts. The theme is deep in America, from Hawthorne to E. B. White, from the Puritans to Richard Nixon, from *Time* to *The New York Times*. But this diagnosis is not good enough. It is contradicted by the *experience* of powerlessness that is encountered by so many people today. In 1968 a majority of the people certainly wanted peace, but they could not turn their individual wills into action by society. It is not that we do not will action, but that we are unable to act, unable to put existing knowledge to use. Is something wrong with the machinery of society? It apparently no longer works, or we no longer know how to make it work.

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What is the machinery that we rely upon to turn our wishes into realities? In the private sphere, the market system. In the public sphere, the public version of the market system: voter democracy, or democratic pluralism. In both spheres, a system of administration and law, resting ultimately on the Constitution. Could it be that the American crisis results from a structure that is obsolete? All of the other machinery we use becomes obsolete in a short time. A social institution, which is, after all, only another type of machinery, is not necessarily immune from the same laws of obsolescence. The ideals or principles of a society might remain valid, but the means for applying the principles could lose their effectiveness.

If we seek to explain the American crisis in terms of obsolete structure, we might find an illustration in the ideal and the machinery of free speech. The ideal or principle is that every opinion must be expressed freely in order that truth be arrived at. But the machinery for carrying out this ideal was designed for a very different society than ours, a society of small villages, town meetings, and face-to-face discussions. The First Amendment furnishes no workable means for the public to be adequately informed about complex issues. News is cut down into a commodity by the mass media, a staccato piece of show business, and no one who only watches television and reads a typical newspaper could possibly know enough to be an intelligent voter. The vital decisions of the private sector of the economy receive even less adequate coverage and reporting. Moreover, the media systematically deny any fundamentally different or dissenting point of view a