

triumphantly that accelerating earnings inequality growth coincided with declining government transfer growth, he isn't necessarily saying much.

The most instructive lesson of *A Future of Lousy Jobs?* concerns the increasing role education and skills play in determining the fate of American workers. "If the nation has too many unskilled workers rather than too many bad jobs," Burtless writes, "both efficiency and equity will be served by improving the skills of workers now lodged at the

bottom." No doubt some will argue that government should take part in this process, and some businesses may also do so in the spirit of enlightened self-interest. But the most encouraging news here is that individuals can exercise a great deal of control over their future in the job market, provided they make the right kinds of choices about their own human capital.

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ordeal. But the rest of the book is no ordeal at all. Each successive chapter draws the reader quickly into the life and aspirations of the "utopia" with which it deals and communicates a wealth of insight in remarkably few pages. McCord has an eye for the illuminating incident, the revealing statement, the crucial fact, and he knows how to present each of them effectively. Not once did I find myself thumbing ahead to see how far it was to the end of a chapter.

*Voyages to Utopia* begins in modern Tahiti and then takes us back to the first encounter of Europeans with "the fragrant isle," comparing the myth of a Pacific Eden with the reality of Tahiti both in the 18th Century and now. After that we remain in the contemporary world, traveling through Israeli kibbutzim; a retreat center and a countercultural commune in California; an anarchist commune in France; an Anglican religious order dedicated to serving the poor; the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt; communities of Gandhians in India; the diverse socialisms of Yugoslavia, Hungary, and China; and the so-called capitalist utopias of Singapore, La Jolla, California, and Denmark, with numerous short side trips along the way to see what can be learned from related experiments.

Each chapter begins by trying to make the new utopia attractive to the reader before turning to the problems it has encountered and the ambiguities of its mission or self-understanding. McCord professes to be in sympathy with all the societies he studies, and with the exception of La Jolla and perhaps the Muslim Brotherhood, I found this stance credible. He does not set up straw men.

But neither is he a misty-eyed observer. He has a clear eye for the tensions and contradictions that develop when social ideals become incarnate, and he portrays them candidly. He also puts on his scholar's suit at appropriate times to discuss the deeper sources of success and failure within the ventures he describes.

McCord is generally a reliable reporter and analyst. He makes minor mistakes, such as giving Clark Kerr credit

## "No Place"-Like Homes

BY PAUL HEYNE

**Voyages to Utopia: From Monastery to Commune—The Search for the Perfect Society in Modern Times, by William McCord, New York: W.W. Norton, 381 pages, \$22.50**

For readers (like myself) who learned that *utopia* means "no place," the title *Voyages to Utopia* is thoroughly misleading. The places to which the author takes us in this captivating book are all quite real.

William McCord claims that the *u* in *utopia* doesn't necessarily derive from the Greek *ou*, meaning "no" or "not"; it might also come, he says, from *eu*, which means "well" or "good." He opts for the latter derivation and subsequently takes us to visit a fascinating variety of contemporary experiments in creating a good place to live. The extended tour leads through secular and religious fellowships and communes, socialist states, and—somewhat surprisingly—what the author calls "capitalist utopias."

McCord is a well-known sociologist who, in the course of a long career exploring social problems from delinquency and urban conflict to alcoholism and psychopathy, seems to have made the study of utopian ventures a semiprofessional hobby. He has actually visited each of the utopias he describes and has talked with the people who live there, sounding them out on their experiences, their frustrations, and their hopes. He has also read extensively both in the general literature of utopian experiments and the



The Quaker route: Students and teachers pray at a Philadelphia school.

more specific literature of the ventures he discusses. On top of that, he writes easily and well, almost as if he had never learned the techniques that social scientists commonly employ to reduce all writing to shades of gray.

Almost! Beware of the opening chapter, "Prelude to a Journey." After reading its odd combination of personal reminiscence and anticipatory synopsis, I drew a deep breath in preparation for a 350-page

on three occasions for developing the Physical Quality of Life Indexes that Morris David Morris actually developed and that Kerr merely uses. But in those areas where my own knowledge was sufficient to permit an assessment, I was impressed by the depth of McCord's understanding.

It is testimony to the quality of his analysis that he could send to the publisher in 1988 a manuscript containing sizable sections on the "Marxist utopias" of Hungary and China for which he does not have to apologize today. Were he writing those chapters now, he would want to update them, but there is very little he would have to rewrite. While McCord did not predict the dramatic changes that occurred in these countries in 1989, his analysis points clearly to the problems that precipitated them.

REASON readers will be especially curious about the "capitalist utopias" McCord discusses. The only utopia with which the author seems to have no sympathy whatsoever is La Jolla, a wealthy and exclusive enclave near San Diego. But La Jolla also doesn't fit the criteria he claims in the first chapter to have used in selecting utopias to examine. The residents of La Jolla surely did not move there with any intention "to better the condition of all mankind."

Denmark follows La Jolla, and after reading well into the chapter on Denmark I began to suspect that McCord had set up La Jolla as a horrible example of superficiality and selfishness in order to reveal Denmark's "social democracy" as the best alternative around. But my suspicions were unfounded. He does not find the answer in Denmark, either. McCord shows how the rights to welfare that the state has created for its citizens have begun to undermine creativity and personal responsibility, with consequences that now alarm many Danes.

Those who wish to argue with the author will find ample opportunity in the concluding chapter, "Some Cautious Reflections." It's clear McCord has not adequately understood some of the differences between bureaucracies and markets. He caricatures Adam Smith and fails fully to appreciate F.A. Hayek. But

these are relatively minor quibbles.

The book contains valuable counsel for those who forget that social visions must find institutions capable of receiving them, and even more valuable counsel for those who will not read this book or any like it because they are too busy trying to create such institutions by force. But McCord also reminds libertarians of the great variety of yearnings and temperaments that must be satisfied in any enduring society.

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**The Good, the Bad and the Famous, by Len Sherman, New York: Lyle Stuart, 218 pages, \$18.95.** Is this any way to run a country? That's the question Len Sherman asks in *The Good, the Bad and the Famous*. His implicit answer is no.

Sherman looks at the growing attempts by celebrities to influence public policy. Hollywood long has been an important source of money for politicians, particularly those on the far left of the Democratic party. But in recent years, movie stars have begun to place conditions on the money they grant. They want to be heard. Groups such as the Hollywood Women's Political Committee have formed to shape the political agenda. In return for star-studded fundraisers, the HWPC demands that politicians listen to its views on which issues are important and which positions are correct.

The problem with all of this isn't just that all of these celebrities are somewhere to the left of Mao. No, the real problem is that they are all a bunch of ninnies.

Sherman has spent considerable time with some of the most active celebrities, and he recounts some of the lengthy conversations he had. A few stars—most notably Ed Asner, John Randolph, and Charlton Heston—ably explain and defend their ideas. But the statements of most of Sherman's celebrities could lead one to believe that the L.A. smog destroys brain cells.

Consider Jane Fonda's speech at a HWPC benefit for pro-choice candidates: "It's been very special. And it's special to

be from a town, Hollywood, in which some very prophetic words were said by Joan Crawford: 'No more wire hangers!' " Or Morgan Fairchild's explanation of why she was qualified to appear before a Senate committee and discuss an environmental bill: "As an actress, I have spent most of my professional life in dramatic situations which imitate real life. I have become increasingly sensitive to human interaction in a world that is increasingly crowded."

But both of those women appear to be geniuses when compared to Brat Packer Judd Nelson. Asked if people still believe in the traditional institutions of American society, Nelson responds, "It seems that to protect the status quo as opposed to the tremendous gains in public participation in what's considered a democracy, the threat to those in charge of the status quo then pushed into a 'Me Generation' in the 1970s, which, in effect, destroyed every institution that we had. People don't believe in the Supreme Court. Now it's up to Sandra Day O'Connor; she's going to be the deciding vote. The eight men are split, right, so she's going to cast the deciding vote because she's a woman. She has lots of kids, so she's like a great, great mother of the nation. You know. We don't believe in family. More than fifty percent of marriages fail. We don't believe in government anymore. We had a President on the verge of being impeached. He got a pardon by the next joker, who lowered the speed limit." The man not only acts with his nostrils, he apparently thinks with them as well.

The one real weakness with Sherman's book is that it never gets beyond the anecdotes. Ultimately, he never answers the important questions: Why is Hollywood so left-wing? Why does America continue to give a soapbox to bimbos with a cause? And did Jane Fonda really have a boob job? Inquiring minds want to know.

Still, Sherman has performed a valuable service just by retelling his stories. Lest we ever forget, he reminds us that these people may be young, and they may be beautiful, but collectively they don't have the brains God gave a chipmunk.

—Charles Oliver