

or prevalence in certain circles. *The New Color Line* points out how even the most basic principles and values undergirding the American constitutional order were corrupted by its own institutions through the stealth and cunning of ideologists motivated by their visions of racial "justice." That this could happen means that something is drastically amiss in our political culture. It also serves to warn us to be ever vigilant: similar "progressive" ideologies that range well beyond civil rights concerns find favor in elite circles, particularly at our more prestigious law schools in their various "critical legal studies" programs.

The final message of *The New Color Line* is perhaps the most important: "Ultimately, either quotas will go or democracy will, because legal privileges based on status are incompatible with democracy's requirement of equal standing before the law." Quite so. But what is not certain is which one will go.

*George W. Carey is a professor of political science at Georgetown University.*

## The Mad Farmer

by N. Alan Cornett

Another Turn of the Crank

by Wendell Berry

Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint,  
122 pp., \$18.00



The Luddite tradition that Wendell Berry hails so eloquently is the same, he insists, that caused the men of '76 to break from Britain. It is the Jeffersonian Democratic tradition that was partly destroyed (in both the North and the South) by the War Between the States, and almost wholly wrecked by the one-world fantasies of men like Woodrow Wilson, and the centralizing notions of men like Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In his latest book, Berry proves that the tradition, though too often ignored today, is alive and well. He has been farming and writing in his native Henry County, Kentucky, for 30 years now. He has experienced the glitz of cosmopolitanism at Stanford and New York University, yet he prefers the hills

overlooking the Kentucky River to the fashionable academic scene. He prefers his community of Port Royal to virtual communities on the information superhighway. Foremost, Berry prefers truth to the *drivel fed to us every day by the purveyors of popular culture.*

Berry begins *Another Turn of the Crank* with a strike against rampant globalism. In "Farming and the Global Economy," he reminds us that "the whole population of the world cannot live on imported food." Since World War II, local farming communities have been systematically annihilated, their populations moved to urban centers. The start of this, Berry notes, was the switch from solar energy to an almost complete reliance on fossil fuels. Farmers are not its only victims: so are the consumers of their produce. Cities have watched complacently as food production has become more and more concentrated in a few, often distant areas. Local food production is ignored, and even thought to be unnecessary. Yet it is in the best interest of cities to encourage a vibrant countryside surrounding and supporting them, rather than to rely on food transported from thousands of miles away. In this way, both country and city are bolstered, the origin of the produce known and its quality monitored; also, community can be strengthened.

Berry recognizes that our national political leaders do not have the "local affections and allegiances" that would permit them to understand such concerns. They will be of no help. As Berry writes in "Conserving Communities," "American farmers, who over the years have wondered whether or not they counted, may now put their minds at rest: they do not count." Having destroyed the farming interest, politicians can now ignore them. But reformists should no longer direct their efforts toward convincing men of power that their cause is just: it is on the local level that changes must be made—through the civic groups, conservation groups, and co-ops, as well as, most importantly, through direct consumer choice. As in his last book of essays and in his poem, "The Mad Farmer, Flying the Flag of Rough Branch, Secedes From the Union," Berry urges secession: not formal political secession, but secession from the global economy and a return to our communities. Rather than remaining subservient to the Democratic and Republican parties, to

NAFTA and GATT, to Disney and Warner, we need to align ourselves with the new political division that has come to exist between the party that holds that the community has no value, and the other that believes that it does. In the interests of promoting the health of communities, Berry suggests a number of rules for action, including, "Always supply local needs first," and "Make sure that money paid in to a local economy circulates within the community for as long as possible before it is paid out."

Berry addresses the theme of community self-sufficiency in a wonderful essay, "Conserving Forest Communities," where Berry highlights the needs of Eastern Kentucky. What Berry fears, and what Appalachia should fear, is that what happened with coal will happen with timber: outside interests will move in, exploit what is there, and leave, requiring the next generation to cope with the damage created by a boom-and-bust economy. Berry is not a tree-spiker opposed to the harvesting of timber; he is a realist who sees that the needs of Eastern Kentucky will outrun the next 20 years. He regards Kentucky's forest lands as a sustainable resource that can be maintained to support an area indefinitely. Forestry communities should not allow themselves to remain a colonial economy, shipping logs to distant places; instead "People in the local community [should] be employed in forest management, logging, and sawmilling, in a variety of value-added small factories and shops, and in satellite or supporting industries." Berry offers as an example of the practicability of his suggestion the Menominee Indians of Wisconsin. In the 140 years during which they have held their forest reservation, they have cut two billion board feet of timber on a forest currently estimated to contain one and a half-billion board feet. The Indians there do not regard logging as an economy, but as a culture.

Such an economy is impossible without clear concepts of both private property rights and stewardship. In recent years, private property rights have been under assault from the government and from so-called environmentalists. Berry, as a conservationist as well as a private property owner, perceives the dangers in this attack against the private property rights of individuals, and also against stewardship as it is properly understood. In "Private Property and the Common

Wealth," he argues that in order for land to be properly cared for, it must be privately held in small parcels; the people who are then dependent on that land will do the best job of caring for it. We cannot, Berry says, "get good care in the use of the land by demanding it from public officials." Four hundred and forty thousand private landowners in Kentucky would be "fierce" in their opposition to the restriction of their property rights, and Wendell Berry would be with them in their opposition. He urges in place of the environmentalist vision the Jeffersonian one: a land dotted with small landholders who know their land, depend upon it for their livelihood, and have great affection toward it. This is how the land ought to be protected and used.

In "Health is Membership," Berry quotes Sir Albert Howard and argues that "the whole problem of health in soil, plant, animal, and man [is] one great subject." Typically, Berry takes the broad view: "I believe that the community—in the fullest sense: a place and all its creatures—is the smallest unit of health and that to speak of the health of an isolated individual is a contradiction." Toward a more proper understanding of health, we must distance ourselves from the modern idea of the body as a machine and the mind as a computer. Hospitals exemplify this modern attitude toward health by their constant noise, poor food, and detached staff, as Berry suggests in his account of the events surrounding his brother's recent heart attack. Though Berry acknowledges that the hospital saved his brother's life, he recounts an incident that gives a disturbing insight into the state of modern medicine:

When John was in intensive care after his surgery, his wife, Carol, was standing by his bed, grieving and afraid. Wanting to reassure her, the nurse said, "Nothing is happening to him that doesn't happen to everybody."

And Carol replied, "I'm not everybody's wife."

As Berry realizes, without a full appreciation of death and love, we can never have a proper understanding of true health.

*N. Alan Cornett lives in Lexington, Kentucky, and is preparing a bibliography of M.E. Bradford's writings.*

## Brief Mentions

**As I Walked Out One Evening.**  
By W.H. Auden. Edited by Edward Mendelson (New York: Vintage), 220 pp., \$12.00

W.H. Auden is famous for poems about totalitarian evil, but he also wrote frivolous verse when in the mood. In assembling *As I Walked Out One Evening*, Edward Mendelson, the executor of Auden's estate, sifted through the vast corpus of his work, picking out "lullabies, limericks, and other light verse" (to quote from the front cover). Auden honed his craft with dirges such as "Spain 1937" and "September 1, 1939," but the poems collected here employ short, epigrammatic couplets and acerbic bits of dialogue. Declaring early in the volume that "I hate . . . all authority," Auden ridicules its manifestations in modern life: big business, public education, the military state. Auden's Marxist leanings are evident throughout. In a typical entry, "'Gold in the North' Came the Blizzard to Say," he traces the careers of five young men during the Depression. Typical is the fate of a neophyte stockbroker, who says: "In the streets of New York I was young and swell, / I rode the market, the market fell, / One morning I woke and found myself in hell." Other entries, such as "Refugee Blues"

and "James Honeyman," deal with the plight of people who are of no use to the state bureaucracy ("If you've got no passport you're officially dead," a refugee is told). These poems are clever, but the centerpiece of the volume is the "Letter to Lord Byron," a 40-page discourse on politics, sex, Auden's life, and other assorted topics. Auden expounds upon a few of the developments in art and society that followed the Romantic age, praising the advent of modernism and condemning corporate rapacity. Although the poem is politicized—at one point Auden quips, "Today, thank God, we've got no snobbish feeling / Against the more efficient modes of stealing"—he also presents real insights, as in this description of the effects of television and advertising on the public mentality: "We're growing up and up indeed. / Advertisements can teach us all we need; / And death is better, as the millions know, / Than dandruff, night-starvation, or B.O." (If you compare Auden to the political poets of today—June Jordan and Adrienne Rich—his brash Marxism starts to look appealing.) He discusses the emergence of the novel as a form of popular culture and the sudden popularity of innovators like Louis MacNeice and Wyndham Lewis, the "sobering few / . . . trying hard to think of something new." This volume may jolt readers familiar with the serious Auden, but it is an entertaining romp.

—Michael Washburn

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