

This letter to the editor in Northern Westchester's leading newspaper is a tongue-in-cheek cushion-shot, "doing theology" in relation to the basic value-thinking we must do if we--mankind--are to survive.

I hope to set the current sewer dialog at a new angle--and thus open the discussion to greater depths--by shifting attention from sewer to toilet.

"The culprit," of course, is original sin, not the pottie. But pottie technology is a theological matter, a micro-of the macro-planning necessary for survival, and as tactile--as daily--as "I am the door...."

Of course there is the possibility that almost all my fellow-citizens will conclude that I'm talking only about pipes and johns. I have always had this problem.... folks thinking I'm talking about something else.... I must, as does the Bible, count on the Remnant.

Back to chamber pot

Patent Trader, ed. p., 16 Mar 72

'Improvement' brings no joy

To the Editor:

Back to the chamber pot and the outhouse! In the cities, the chamber pot and honey wagon!

Two events have led me to this crazy, intelligent conclusion -- no, three. First, some European relatives whom we visit whenever in central Europe. For centuries the detritus from their home has been run forty feet underground, where it liquifies and then is pumped into their private honey wagon and run down between the vines to make wine that over here sells for \$4.99 (small European size). Enrichment of the earth and the heart, with no pollution of streams, rivers, ocean.

Second, our European trip last summer in a dormobile (camper with john and all else for self-contained, self-propelled living). Chamber pot. Neat, beautiful, public collecting points for our contribution to the enrichment soil. No stink from the pot: a chemical that furthers the ultimate soil-building process. No need for the waste of precious water for flushing. Again, no pollution of streams, rivers, ocean.

Third, they're coming. It's spring and they're coming to tear up the beautiful garden of our Chappaqua home. It's for "improvement," they say. It's so sad. It's the reverse of improvement, this going from septic tank to sewer. Oh, it's "improvement" in the sense that it moves our effluvial problem from our neighborhood elsewhere--via streams, river, ocean. This kind of improvement--pushing our problems off onto others--who needs?

Indeed, who, in the last analysis, which is soon, can survive? It's as intelligent, as, and of the same mentality as, facing the problem of communism in Vietnam so we won't have to face it in California--and then discovering that pushing a fantasy problem into Southeast Asia created actual problems in California. It's as intelligent

as our failure to ratify certain conventions of the United Nations, such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, because we in America don't have the problem (!). It's as intelligent as pushing national problems off down onto the lower classes. It's as intelligent as

continue with the same unexamined assumptions in private and public life. Growth for growth's sake is not inevitable: "zero growth" is not unthinkable: voiding the fill -- simplifying life -- is not unreasonable, but the only reasonable course because the only way of bio-salvation.

Letters

tribalistic resistance to the emergence of global authorities for the handling of global problems, and the optimal processing of global resources.

Yes, it's spring, and the authorities have determined that our family's effluvia are to be taken from us and given as a gift to the world, via the Hudson River and the Atlantic Ocean. Processed effluvia is some answer to disease but no answer at all to eutrophic pollution, the major problem for marine life. Because of the Chappaqua sewer system, the Elliott family will, when we die, leave the world a somewhat worse place than when we entered it--ecologically speaking. But, we're told, anything else is unthinkable and therefore the sewage system is "inevitable."

Well, thinkables aren't going to save this old world. I'm no anti-intellectual, but I know that reason alone, reason as we've given it -- technocratic head, is leading us to "inevitable" ecocide and, therefore, human selfcanceling.

So what's not "inevitable," unthinkable ("unreasonable")? It's not inevitable that we con-

That's one necessity: examining the assumptions of the American Way of Life -- and it needs to go on in the culture, in places of power and decision making, not just in the counter-culture, powerless to effect its dreams of alternative societies. Another necessity is shifting our attention. When we're healthy, we're playful and pliant about shifting our attention; but there's such a thing as "the pathology of attention," and one element of it is staring, fixing focus, on one point.

So we come down to the attention-point. It's been the place where the effluvia leave the house: from there "the waste" (invidious term!) can go only into septic tank or into sewer. But if we move our attention up into the house, we find the culprit: the toilet, which till now has been an improvement on the portable chamber pot. Till now. No longer. With our prejudice for "progress," reversal from toilet-sewer back to pot-outhouse has been unthinkable, laughable, crazy. Because "practical" people resist "crazy" scenarioing and courageous decision-making, we'll probably not survive. But I pray we will.

WILLIS E. ELLIOTT,
Chappaqua