

Post-Revolution Technology

A Compendium

Fifth Estate Collective

1977

All “modern” technology on the planet today is massive and centralized and demands, by its very nature, centralized political control—authoritarianism is built into those very instruments supposedly designed to free us from the drudgeries of life.

In a revolution that brought about a decentralized, voluntaristic community as the basic mode of human association, technology would become a central question since the operation of it would suddenly depend upon those involved instead of corporations and the state. Unless you want to try to survive in a sub-zero outhouse, technology will have to be re-organized along more human, rational and ecologically sound lines.

Many people have thought long and hard trying to come up with solutions to this problem of technology and many of these same people have decided to do something practical about it. Listed below are some books, magazines and newsletters which deal with an area that is variously called “alternative,” “appropriate,” and/or “radical” technology.

Generally, this field is the nitty-gritty side of the libertarian coin. The items in the list show how to put to work many of the ideas most people usually just talk about; they are “how to” manuals for people with self-reliant ideas who want to get their hands dirty. “Self-managed sweat is the biggest turn-on of all!” shrieks one magazine.

One thing these publications are not is gadget directories for the idle left. As one author puts it, “radical technology implies a fundamental re-examination of the role of technology in modern societies. Radical technology is not just a way for the middle class to trim its central heating bills.” In any case, most of the people who publish these things sound like they’ll part with a free copy if you write them a nice letter.

MEDICAL SELF-CARE, AN ACCESS TO MEDICAL TOOLS (\$7 per year (4 issues), P.O. Box 718, Inver-mess CA 94937 How to take care of yourself and your neighbors, first aid and long-term health needs. Emphasis is heavy on the how-to.

UNDERCURRENTS MAGAZINE [published bimonthly in London. Sub rates: \$7.50 per year. Write Undercurrents, Subscriptions, 11 Shadwell, Uley, Dursley, Gloucestershire, England.] Since this mag is put out by many of the same people who did Radical Technology, the above description goes double for this. The most recent issue contained articles such as: Squatting Hints, Print It Yourself, How To Make A Ley Detector, The Radio-Carbon Revolution, Let Them Eat Oats. Also, reviews, letters and cartoons.

RADICAL TECHNOLOGY [edited by Godfrey Boyle and Peter Harper, Pantheon Books, New York, \$5.95] This book sums up better than anything what this whole “alternative technology” thing is all about. Its hundreds of extremely readable articles cover both the “hardware”—the machines and technical methods themselves—and the “software”—the social and political structures, the way people relate to each other and to their environment, and how they feel about it. The book is divided into seven sections: Food, Energy, Shelter, Autonomy, Materials, Communications and Other Perspectives. Articles include topics such as making your own paper, building small-scale water supplies, making car tire shoes, self-help housing, what to look for in scrap yards and how to start your own radio station. There are also interviews with real, live radical technologists like the Street Farmers, a group of

British anarchist architects, and visionary drawings of “how it could be.” As the authors themselves say: “It is an unusual book.”

THE OLD HOUSE JOURNAL (Sub rates: \$12 per year (12 issues), 188 Berkeley Pl., Brooklyn NY 112 11217) This is aimed at people who might wish to restore “the legacy given us by past generations,” but also contains plenty of good stuff to know about fixing up any old house, even those sent through the HUD mill.

RADICAL AGRICULTURE (Edited by Richard Merrill, Harper/Colophon Books, 10 E. 53 St. NY, NY 10022) Everything you need to know about feeding yourself (and others).

CONSERVER SOCIETY NEWS [Sub rates: \$5.00 per year (six issues) 512 Blvd. Wilfred Lavigne Aylmer, Quebec J94 3W3 Canada] Like the newsletter from the Institute for local Self-Reliance, only this time for Canada. Reports from each province:-

RAIN MAGAZINE [Sub rates: \$10 for ten issues Write: 2270 NW living Portland OR 97210] Rain does ten times a year what we are doing in this one column. Each issue is chocked full of sources for books, magazines and pamphlets.

FIRST STEPS IN VILLAGE MECHANIZATION [1975 by G. A. Macpherson. Tanzania Publishing House. P.O. Box 2138 Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania] When was the last time you wrote to Tanzania for a book? Well, get out the airmail stamps if you want a reportedly super encyclopedia on building a settlement from the ground up.

NEW AGE FOODS STUDY CENTER (790 Los Palos Manor, Lafayette CA 94549)

Sink your teeth into some delicious Tofu after you order one of the center’s cookbooks which specialize in healthy, easy to produce food. Also, much info on other delicacies like Shoyu and Mismo.

INTEGRATIVE DESIGN ASSOCIATES (1740 N St., NW, Washington DC 20036 This outfit has the most comprehensive listing of people across the country involved in designing and doing projects on their own. There is a small fee for the list to individuals, but it’s free for listed groups, so take it from there.

A BAREFOOT DOCTOR’S MANUAL (U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare; Publication (NIH) 75-695 from U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington DC 20402, \$9.75) At last report these were selling like hotcakes, but if there are any left, a lot of people say it’s worth the ten bucks. This is the translation of the Chinese manual and contains 960 pages of anatomy, hygiene, diagnosis, therapy, birth control, acupuncture, first aid and much, much more.

SELF-RELIANCE [a newsletter put out by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance in Washington, D.C. Sub rates: \$6.00 for six issues per year. Write Institute for Local Self-Reliance, 1717 18th Street, N.W, Washington D.C. 20009] Like most of these radical technology journals, Self-Reliance’s politics are about as clear as a muddy puddle of water, quoting Kropotkin and Senator Hatfield in the same paragraph. Nonetheless, since the Institute for Local Self-Reliance was formed, as its newsletter explains, “to investigate the technical feasibility of community self-reliance in high density living areas,” it’s overflowing with useful info on what people are doing to de-centralize themselves. It also seems to be trying to come up with more actual news in the do-it-yourself area, like diagrams and the like.

TAP [the newsletter of the Technological American Party. Sub rates: \$4.00 per year (ten issues). Write: TAP, Room 504, 152 W. 42 St., New York, NY 10036] Phone freaks, electro nuts, computer bandits and just about every other techno crazy in America reads TAP’s weird but informative newsletter published by right-wing libertarians. Whether you want to build a blue box or disconnect the Power Company meter on the back of your house or re-arrange the computer print label on your groceries, TAP is where you will find the info.

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