

A MODEST PROPOSAL

by Tom Johnson

Millions of years ago, archaeologists tell us, the earth was populated almost entirely by giant, cold-blooded reptiles. Dim-witted, lazy creatures, we can suppose that they spent most of their time either eating or sleeping. But changes in the climate caused the decline of these noble beasts and favored the development of smaller, warm-blooded animals, the marsupials and the mammals. In the last category simians evolved and slowly, we are told, developed into the first men at least two million years ago. These first men were about two feet tall and were not far removed from their fellow primates. Arboreal creatures, inconspicuous at first, they were physically inferior to most other creatures, but mentally they developed an amazing superiority. They began to use this power to alter their environment, to change the course of nature, and to conquer the world. To do these things more effectively, they banded together and established things called "societies." And so it all began.

Cities, slums, epidemics, wars, genocides, slavery, bombs, knives, crime, billboards, television commercials, automobile horns, sonic booms, zoos, garbage dumps, automobile junkyards, LSD, rock and roll, poverty, income tax, and big government. These, needless to say, are just a few examples of the ingenious creations of mankind. After all, nature may be pretty and quiet and peaceful, but it simply is not efficient; it therefore has been replaced as much as possible.

But in the last fifty years, and especially in the last ten years, man has reached a plateau in his mental development, and a carefully devised plan has been instituted that would solve all of these problems. While I cannot claim to be the sole author of this plan, I must say, humbly, that I have perfected it to a degree in which it will quickly, efficiently, inconspicuously rid mankind of all its problems. Therefore, in co-authorship with the other people who have helped develop this plan, I will present the details of our remarkably simple solution.

We have decided to exterminate the human race. That this has been tried before is a fact of which we are aware, but past attempts have used wars as a means of accomplishing the goal of extermination. Success was prevented by a lack of technological developments, although that corporal with the funny little moustache made a good

effort. However, man has now reached the point where he can turn the earth into a thermonuclear fireball. But we reject that idea for two reasons. First, all other life on this planet will be destroyed as well, and we feel that, of all of nature's creatures, only man is destructive, evil, and corrupt. The rest, therefore, should be given every possible chance of survival, and our plan allows for this. Secondly, the little greenmen who are observing the earth would expect something more subtle and sophisticated from us, and, by all means, we should not disappoint them. Having found no other acceptable alternatives, our plan is gradually being implemented.

Sir Walter Raleigh was one of the first members of our group. Countless successes have resulted from his introduction of tobacco smoking into Europe. The last fifty years has been a period of tremendous progress; in the United States alone, we can count on over fifty thousand victories each year. But the disconcerting fact is that the American Cancer Society is attempting to nullify our gains. We cannot protest too strongly! A vigorous counter-campaign shall be waged. Longer cigarettes are being produced. Slogans such as "Be a real he-man! Show her you like to live dangerously!" and "Come on all you tigers. Smoke Feline cigarettes and roar!" will soon appear. For the women we have developed a special, slim cigarette that soon will be available in a variety of colors to match any outfit. We are confident that with such tactics the opposition will be defeated.

Another successful member of our group was Henry Ford; his invention also manages to kill over fifty thousand people each year in the United States. Comparable successes are being reported in most of the advanced countries of the world. In spite of attacks by Ralph Nader and others, we shall, in the end, prevail. Very few people fasten seat belts, and windshield glass is harder than ever. Engines are constantly being made larger and more powerful. Many car models can be on the road for several years before the government takes notice of certain defects in the vehicles and makes the factory call them back. The popularity of the Volkswagen (one of our best designs) is soaring. We are also proposing the abolition of speed limits and the elimination of nuisances such as stop signs and warning signs. After all, signs have incredibly low intelligence quotients, and everybody should consider his judgment to be better than that of a sign.

The Wright brothers also made a contribution to our cause. Crowded skies and overworked air controllers have been a very success-

ful combination. In addition, new airplanes will be able to decrease the population by over five hundred in a single crash.

Countless other methods of extermination exist. Color televisions that emitted radiation had a marvelous future until the government learned about them. Nevertheless, television helps promote inactivity which, when combined with large amounts of high-cholesterol foods, can be a very efficient means of extermination. The government however, has suggested that people exercise. We also agree with this policy. In fact, it is our opinion that people should build up their bodies as fast as possible by immediately doing the most vigorous exercises that can be devised. It might be noted that this technique has proved best after at least several years of almost complete inactivity, especially with older people.

However, the ultimate weapon to be used in accomplishing the announced goal of this plan is combined air and water pollution. New York, Los Angeles, and Pittsburgh are excellent examples of the high degree of air pollution that can be reached with very little effort. New inventions help create more and more factories to produce goods and, in the process, pollute the air. Since people tend to concentrate in cities, the bulk of the human race can eventually be dispatched in this manner. Many animals will also be killed by this air pollution, but, since most animals tend to inhabit remote areas, enough will survive to repopulate the world once all humans are gone. Factories, particularly chemical plants, also produce excellent water pollution. The once-blue Danube has turned brown, and even the Great Lakes are becoming polluted. With some effort, pollution levels can be increased until water purification plants can no longer handle the load. Elimination of the people in urban areas will thus be hastened. People in the rural areas of the more advanced countries will meet the same fate as their urban brothers; it will just take a little longer.

To eliminate the people of underdeveloped countries would seem much more difficult, but it actually will be very easy. We propose that the United States adopt as part of its plan for aid to underdeveloped countries the construction of large chemical factories at the sources of and at various points along the lengths of each of the major river systems in the world. Having no purification plants, primitive peoples must rely on stream water being potable. By the time they perceive that the water is no longer safe to drink, it will be too late. Animal life in and along these river systems will also die, but enough

creatures in remote areas will survive to repopulate the land. Ocean-dwelling creatures will, of course, remain relatively unaffected.

Thus, the major advantages of this plan are that it is subtle, gradual, neat, and that it will basically limit extinction to the human race, nature's greatest mistake. And once more the noble creatures of nature will reign supreme; once more the earth will be beautiful.

ENTER, SIR

by Robert Basile

Enter, sir.

Enter Sir Robert's manor and gaze
upon the work of a man.

Notice the hue and fragrance of his garden;
The rough-hewn walls and simple furnishings
with which he lives.

In this room sir, is the altar where Robert and his love
meet in silent communion, a precious creation.
Here is his desk, where he pours out a tale as sylvan
and sweet as life itself.

And here, sir, is the hearth, where he sits at night
To coax secrets from the flickering lights,
delving into the rose-hued coals.

And now I bid you leave, sir, for Sir Robert stands
by the window, weeping.