INTRODUCTION

I want to welcome you on behalf of the Schumacher Society and Simon's Rock College. This is the second conference sponsored by the Schumacher Society and we think appropriately on a subject which was very close to Dr. Schumacher's heart. In the latter part of his life his interest turned increasingly to trees, tree crops, and forestry, as you will be able to see in the film which we are showing this afternoon, and which was the last film he made before his death in 1977.

In the preface to the book on Forest Farming, Schumacher recounts this interesting personal note: story of Richard Gregg

MY OWN EXPERIENCE WITH TREE CROPS.

It is important to note that while Fritz Schumacher was the advocate of decentralized, regional based and village based economic planning -- he came to the recognition of such a position from a world perspective. His message to Western nations to take care in the growing and planting of trees came from his experience in Asia and other developing areas which made him realize how important trees were to the health and well being of the people and the whole economy of the villages of India, Burma, Africa, etc.

Much of Schumacher's thinking in his book SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL was influenced by Gandhi and the work of Buddhist economists. He acted as an economic consultant in India and speaks of that experience:

Travelling through India, I came to the conclusion that there was no salvation for India except through TREES. I advised my Indian friends as follows: "The Good Lord has not disinheritied any of his children and as far as India is concerned he has given her a variety of trees, unsurpassed anywhere in the world. There are trees for almost all human needs. One of the greatest teachers of India was the Buddha who included in his teaching the obligation of every good Buddhist that he should plant and see to the establishment of one tree at least every five years. As long as this was observed, the whole large area of India was covered with trees, free of dust, with plenty of water, plenty of shade, plenty of food and materials. Just imagine you could establish an ideology which made it obligatory for every..."
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As a fuel economist (you may know that Schumacher for a long time worked with the Coal Board in England), he was very much interested in trees as a source of energy. On a world wide basis trees represent the major source of renewable energy. In developing countries no less than one and one half billion people derive at least 90% of their energy requirements from wood and charcoal." These figures come from the National Academy of Sciences book on FIREWOOD CROPS.

Schumacher had predicted the energy crisis some fifteen years before it became apparent to almost everyone, and he also foresaw the coming world wide food crisis. He strongly believed that trees could play an important role in providing food in many parts of the world where trees could be planted on hillsides, rocky places and deserts where agricultural crops could not grow.

When Schumacher met President Carter in 1977, the President asked him what he could do to "help the cause". Schumacher suggested that he should plant a fruit tree on some conspicuous public occasion, because such a gesture could be important for stimulating interest in trees for food -- as well as energy. That Fritz followed his own advise is evident in the work he did at his own home -- cutting down an acre of brush to plant fruit trees.
It seems appropriate that we should follow the E.F. Schumacher Society lectures in October on small farms and regional planning for food production, with a conference on trees and forestry. Particularly in New England and the Northeast where trees occupy 70-80% of the land mass and are the major, but most underutilized, natural resource in the region. Why is it true that the forests are underutilized?

I think there are several reasons, perhaps the most important are:

*** Size of forestland holding are relatively small. Landowners of small holdings, many of whom are farmers, are often either too busy to seriously manage their own woodlot, or feel too uncertain about how to go about it, -- or feel they can't afford professional help in the woodlot.

*** Average time which land is held by one owner often discourages owners from making long term commitments to forest management programs.

*** Forest management costs also tend to be relatively high in the early years and thereby discourage professional help especially for the small land owners. However the energy component as a by-product of selective thinning, has improved the economic outlook.

In an effort to overcome these problems, a number of programs have developed in the Northeast to insure good forest management. Today we'll hear about several of these programs from our speakers.

I would like the conference to consider the question of how we can encourage greater participation in our associations by members of the community as a whole -- members who are not landowners. We have tried to convey in the announcement of the conference how the forests, as a natural resource, are important to the community as a whole in terms of environmental benefits, employment, energy, food, etc. The question is: how can we implement in practice
the interests of a regional community in the healthy management of
the forests -- a community that probably consists of more non-owners
than owners of forests. Perhaps a Community Forestry Association
could provide the forum for a more broad-based discussion and growth
activity in the forests itself.

I think there could be real mutual benefits to both owners and
non-owners in such associations. For example: as the present
recession deepens into depression (I'm not optimistic about Reagan
economics bringing us out of the recession) a major problem for forest
owners, including farmers, will be how to pay for labor to work in
the woods, or to plant new trees which are needed. At the same time
unemployment, especially among young people, is increasing and unem­
ployment benefits and welfare are decreasing while inflation takes its
toll on living standards. In this situation a Community Forestry
Association could provide a means by which to organize work groups
(of unemployed or underemployed) which, under professional forestry
supervision, could provide the labor for working in the woods with
payments being in cords of wood.

In her book on Barter, Annie Proulx points out that during the
depression of the 1930's many towns and cities organized unemployed
people to work in the woods. They were either paid in cords of wood
or were given script (or vouchers) with which to purchase food at local
stores or from farmers, who in turn were paid in cords of wood.
Examples of such community efforts come from different parts of the world.

In Korea, with government assistance and prodding, whole villages
have undertaken management and reforestation of thousands of acres of
land most of which was and is privately owned. Owners have received
a portion of the income from the produce (for firewood and lumber) and
villagers are paid in wood. A surplus, in fact, has accumulated and
this is placed in a fund for further village development.
In India, I visited villages in the Himalayan Mountains which had organized themselves and were replanting vast acreages of denuded hillsides at their own expense and volunteer labor. They had organized in part to protect themselves from the continuous cutting of the forests which resulted in landslides and floods, often wiping out an entire village. This was known as the "chipko" or "hug the trees" movement in India because the people, organized in groups, would literally hug the trees in order to prevent outside contractors from indiscriminately cutting down trees so badly needed to prevent erosion.

**STORY OF WOMEN STOPPING WOOD-CUTTERS**

My reading of these movements is that it is the enthusiasm of the group working together which creates the energy to accomplish these tasks which seem almost overwhelming to the individual. I feel that Community Forestry Associations might play a similar role here in the US in that they could tackle the seemingly overwhelming job of properly managing the forests of New England -- in the US, in California, the TREE PEOPLES have done a remarkable job of reforesting suburban areas in an effort to improve the atmosphere of Southern California.

Finally, I would hope that Community Forestry Associations could help bridge the gap between forestry and agriculture, in that the associations would promote the concept of agro-forestry, forest farming, or tree crops as the concept is generally known. In this way by emphasizing the potential of trees to raise fruits, nuts and forage crops, we can enlist the interest and energy of the community as food prices continue to rise in the growing food crisis.
My hope is that today by learning what is being done in other parts of New England and the Northeast, we will all be inspired to return to our communities, to plant trees, work in the woods, and organize Community Forestry Associations which will revitalize the forests and our communities as well.

And now I want to introduce our first speaker.