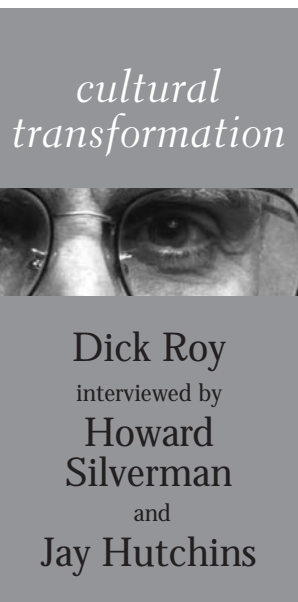


For Dick Roy and his wife Jeanne, the deep ecology principle “take for vital needs” calls humans to shift life passion to activities that do not consume resources and energy. To move in that direction, the Roys have reduced household garbage to one can a year, eliminated air travel as a vacation option, and moved to a diet of mostly locally grown, seasonal, organic food. They find joy in simple activities like making sour kraut together with the aid of their grandparents’ cabbage cutter and bicycling on weekends. They resist the pursuit of efficiency and convenience offered by the newest electronic device. Whereas they have found a professional need for the computer and answering machine, they have never owned a clothes dryer, microwave oven, power mower, garage door opener, video camera, or cell phone.



earth. Some changes, like an incremental step toward a vegetarian diet, are much easier to make than others. Each of us can become an agent of change in our circle of influence. I created Oregon Lawyers for a Sustainable Future, because I am a lawyer. Now that is a large circle of influence, but in general, the smaller the circle the greater one’s influence. We can also make demands on others in daily life. When we observe practices that degrade the earth, in many instances, we acknowledge our standing to demand change. This is certainly true when we spend or invest our money.

Silverman: How did you decide to establish organizations that act on these premises? Tell us about your background.

Silverman: Tell us a little about the organizations you founded, the Northwest Earth Institute and the Center for Earth Leadership. How do these two organizations operate?

Roy: Our focus is to seek cultural change at the community level. We all live and work in a very large community, the City of Portland. Its 500,000 people form countless circles where people meet face-to-face over time—in workplaces, churches, neighborhoods, interest groups, and service clubs.

In our view, we will not have a truly sustainable society without a change in culture. That’s the first of our four premises. The premises are: First, fundamental transformation of our consumer culture is requisite to a sustainable future. Second, individual citizens must be the leaders in this great transformation. Third, most Northwest citizens have immense potential to assume a leadership role. Fourth, motivation, not education, is the engine that drives citizen leadership.

We started by forming noon-time discussion groups in Portland work places to share our view of a sustainable society. By word-of-mouth, they spread into homes, churches, and other communities. Now these courses have been offered in all fifty states and 600 communities—to over 76,000 people. We only describe the process to be followed, not the content. The content comes from the discussion.

At the Center, our most popular course focuses on how to become an agent of change in your circle of influence. The goal is to empower the individual through awareness, consciousness, intent, motivation, and then action.

Silverman: Where does this schema of awareness, consciousness, etc. come from? Did you develop that?

Roy: Yes. For example, when I was in college, I read a book about heart attacks and I became aware of saturated fat. You have to take that information into your consciousness, because awareness is often fleeting and transitory. So I formed the intent to reduce saturated fat; I was motivated to do that. And then I just kind of systematically changed my eating habits.

We all have the ability to reduce our personal impacts on the

Roy: I met my wife Jeanne at Oregon State when we were undergraduates. After the navy, I went to Harvard Law School and graduated in 1970. We reached an agreement where I would work as a lawyer, and Jeanne would work full time as a volunteer. She has been an advisor at all levels of government. Meanwhile, I was working as a corporate lawyer. I worked 15 years with Collins Pine, the most progressive timber industry company in the nation. And then for ten years I was involved with public policy, as an appointed governmental gubernatorial appointee. But in 1991, we started to feel that things could not be sustainable without a change in culture—because progressive public policy can always be changed.

Hutchins: Has sustainability become more than a buzzword in our culture . . . let us say in the Northwest?

Roy: I would say that the sustainability has become a buzzword for sure. In terms of how far have we gotten, that is a much harder question. In terms of my model—awareness, consciousness, and all that—I think we have come a long, long, long way in terms of awareness and consciousness. But in terms of motivation, we still have a way to go.

Hutchins: Is it in our nature to create the problem that we have created?

Roy: Well, you would have to say that it happened, but it did not have to happen this way. I do not think it was predetermined.

When we see a sustainable future, we think there are three elements. The first one is a reverential view of the biosphere. We live on a privileged planet, and it is a precious thing. The second is that people will shift their passion from consuming resources to not consuming. We all have total control over our passion. Spending money does not bring us greater happiness. The third is that people will take responsibility for their bioregion. If we do not, then no one else will. In fact, living fully in place is a very natural thing to do. We know that people can do all three of these things, and we know that they enrich their lives through all three of those things. 