

Machir@g-express.net

MARSH INSTITUTE

10/3/02

Thank you very much.

I like being on Shenandoah University College campus, because I love learning new things. A college campus is somewhere between a temple and an amusement park—a place dedicated to wisdom and our curiosities and our childlike sense of wonder. The college campus should be our model for life generally, and for our cities particularly. Except for the food, of course, (although this was lovely).

People of all ages should feel at home here, because the adventure of learning and the 'ah ha!' of a sudden new understanding of the old world is a lifelong romance with the divine.

Has this old girl learned anything new lately? I think I may be coming to understand better the nature of democracy, power and the proper human scale of things.

Look around the world, and look at all the bright young students who are concerned that overlarge

corporations and overlarge global trade banks and control groups are damaging human affairs. I think they are very right in their concerns, and I admire them very much for their bravery and energy in taking a stand, so long as they follow Gandhi's powerfull prescription for social change.

But I do not think these young people will be successful in reducing the scale of corporations or of the controlling organizations that seem to do the corporations' bidding. It may be possible to enforce an ethic of human scale, but I think it is far more possible to pursue the adoption of a new way of thinking about large organizations in a way that will make them less toxic to our planet and our lives.

I think we have learned this: that the larger an institution, public or private, the more genuine and thorough must be its internal system of democracy, and the more intimate must its connection be with the needs of the society it serves.

Man and earth can no longer afford for our corporations to be little private fascist regimes, with Mussolini-like CEOS living like total despots over the thousands of people under them, underpaying them, forcing them to move here and there, and stealing the

value from their work so that the few at the top can live better than any kings or dictators ever lived before. No, the world cannot afford that. A corporation is, or should be, a community of people who spend the better parts of their lives together, and they should have systems of justice and fairness to make their lives and careers decent, civilized, secure and fruitful. As there are tremendous benefits for all of society if that kind of organization should flower, we must create great incentives in our tax codes and other laws for organizations which will adopt that kind of corporate charter. We as consumers could encourage it to, once we have a choice of corporate types to do business with.

The principle, as I say, should be this, the larger the organization, the more democratic its internal structure.

A second principle, relating the size of institutions to the needs of the societies they serve, is just as important. The new or revised charter of any forward thinking corporation should require a thorough connection of the corporate goal and culture with those around it in the community, the nation and, for the largest organizations, the world. We cannot afford corporations that ride roughshod over our

communities, especially if corporations are to be as large and powerful as a nation—which is already the case.

We the people give life to corporations by issuing charters. We must look at what has become of these creatures and now sit down to make some adjustments that will benefit people and the earth. No corporation, after all, can long prosper unless we the people prosper.

I think I have learned that the time has come in the world for this to happen. Thank you