**What is Your Role in the Global Village?**

We learned that globally wherever trouble spots with war or strife exist, some group is being denied and excluded. Between nations, within nations, within communities and families it all is much the same.

Nor is the misdistribution of resources between continents the whole picture. Within continents were can be a great disparity between nations. Asia, for instance, would be much worse were Japan not part of it. Within nations is there equitable distribution? If there were, why would the United States have so many homeless?

What causes global violence, revolution, war and terrorism in the world? Do the “have” nations or peoples even innate violence? If so, how? What kinds of violence? Why?

How about the “have-nots?” Do they ever start violence? What kinds? Why?

In session 1 we learned the major characteristic of violence: it escalates. Internationally and within nations an escalating spiral of violence also takes place when a nation or people is denied human needs, through an oppressive international situation or an oppressive government.

Those oppressive policies cause either national or international unrest. If and when the unrest reveals itself in active dissent, the oppressor feels threatened. World or government repression is increased which can lead to active resistance. This stimulates government police action. Then the people or nation may initiate insurgency or terrorist activities. The government feels the need to respond by instituting counter insurgency actions. This can stimulate armed response or revolution. All-out military action or war follows! It is the same old escalation but on a far larger scale.

In today’s world, nations are interdependent in many ways and constantly growing more so. We can see how dependent we are on other countries for so many of the material things in our lives. In the countries from which we obtain those things, people are deprived.

This discussion, however, should not end without considering what, if anything, we can do to improve the situation. Here, the question more is what can we as individuals do to contribute to the more equitable distribution of resources in the world. As North Americans, obviously, we consume more than our share. Is that consumption necessary? Could it be reduced?

Many of us say it could. Enough of us starting to live more simply would enable many others around the globe to simply live! What is advocated is called “simple living”.

Simple living means establishing a life style so that we consume no more than we actually need. The following readings will help explain the significance further and suggest many ideas for things we might do to reduce the detrimental effects of our over-consumption.

Some will argue that developing countries need the livelihood our buying from them creates. But releasing land and other resources of third world countries from having to fulfill desires of the developed countries would have just the opposite effect. Those resources then could supply the needs, not now met of third world people. Here is an example.

When American pineapple producers came into the Philippines at the invitation of Marcos’ government, who had removed native people from the land turned over for pineapple growth, there was a notable increase in malnutrition in the Philippines. That land had been used to grow food for their own people.

Finally, we must consider the effects of over-consumption on the environment and the damage it does to the ecology. About 100 years too late, we are beginning to look at and respect Native Americans’ philosophy toward preserving the earth. The economic and environmental forces in conflict over the use of land and resources also need badly to understand and use the principles and skills of win-win conflict resolution.

To turn things around, we too must realize the tremendously important role we have to play if things are to change. “One American does 20 to 100 times more damage to the planet than one person in the third world and one rich American causes 1,000 times more destruction” according to a report in the Akron Beacon Journal of April 6, 1990. This is all due to our much, much greater consumption.

John Woolman, about 200 years ago, asked that we look to the clothes we wear, the food we ear, our possession to see “if not the seeds of war are in them!”

This article was written by John Looney.