

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## The Future Is Local



George Zens

ment - quite the contrary. The single biggest flaw in our present economic system is that too many costs are externalized, i.e. paid for by everyone, most likely future generations, not by the people or businesses that actually ran up these costs.

The lesson from the present economic slowdown is simple: We can't pay ourselves more than we earn, and the rest of the world does not owe us a living.

If developing countries want to imitate our way of life, then we're in deep stook.

We are already feeling the competition from China for raw materials like steel and cement. If the Chinese were to be as car-dependent as we are, then the whole present world oil production would go to China - and we think \$4 gasoline is expensive.

We are also discovering (once again, for those of us who remember the last economic downturn and the one before that) that many of our traditional corporate champions (like the automobile industry), national retailers and other chains are giants on clay feet: they tumble easily.

All the more easily as their business decisions are influenced more by Wall Street speculators than by sound economics and long-term cor-

porate interests (never mind the workforce, customers, community or the environment).

Communities that ignore their locally owned businesses for the sake of national chains and big box stores are jeopardizing their economic future and the stability of their social fabric.

National chains treat the communities they have their stores and restaurants in as markets pure and simple, and they will drop them, i.e. close their outlets, whenever it fits their game plan.

We don't have to look far in the Madison area to find examples of that type of behavior.

We also don't have to look far in the Madison area for municipalities that haven't understood that yet, and that keep courting developers that lobby for big box stores.

The present economic downturn provides us with an opportunity to take a step and reflect on what type of society we want.

We can keep dancing to the tune of corporate America and the speculators who conduct it, or we can support our communities and the local businesses, artisans and farmers.

The choice is ours. As is the buying power. It's the true universal language.

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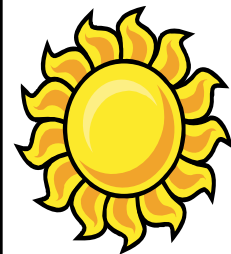
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June 20<sup>th</sup>!



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