

Chapter 15 The Seeds of Hope

All of the problems confronting human society today – economic, ecological, political, or personal – are symptoms of the same faulty ways of thinking that arise from the same faulty worldview. We are never going to solve any of these problems until we change our assumptions about how the world works and our place within it, until we change our ways of thinking and of knowing, and until we learn to rely more on our own common sense and less on pseudo-science and pseudo-expert opinions. However, we can begin to solve all types of problems once we change our worldview, once we change our ways of thinking, and once we begin to use our common sense. This is the message I had hoped to convey in this book. Regardless of whatever else the reader may take from it, I hope that this message came through. The world will not become a truly better place until we have a common sense revolution.

John Ikerd

Shortly after I returned to work following my surgery, Ellen, a lady who had worked for me briefly as a temporary secretary, stopped by my office to wish me a speedy recovery. I knew Ellen was about my age, divorced, attractive, competent, and had recently moved to Missouri from the Northwest; but that was about all I knew about her at the time. A young secretary who also worked for me, Darla, had been trying to convince me for months that I should ask Ellen out on a date – “we were perfect for each other,” she said. However, I told Darla I was too busy to date. Actually, I wasn’t yet ready for that kind of relationship. Ellen stood at my office door and talked for only a minute. She had to get back to work. She now had a position with the University Conference Office. She was working a conference nearby and had stopped by to see Darla.

After Ellen left, I remembered she had sent me a get-well card. That evening I checked the card, but there was no return address. I checked the phone book, but didn’t find a listing. The next day, I asked Darla if Ellen had an e-mail address. She was thrilled. Darla had suggested that Ellen stop by my office the previous day – she hadn’t given up on her match making efforts. This time, it worked.

The week before, I had attended the funeral of a friend and associate whose life had been cut short by a tragic automobile accident. Scott McKinley had been killed on a country road in rural north Missouri while on his way to a meeting that I had hired him to facilitate. Scott couldn’t have been much older than 40. I had been on the way to the same

meeting when I learned of the accident and of Scott’s death. Another young co-worker, Laura Bergman, had been severely injured in the same accident and she would spend several weeks in the hospital. Laura had moved from Ohio to work with me on the Kellogg community development project in north Missouri. She had become almost like a daughter to me over the three years that we had worked together. It was a very traumatic time.

At Scott’s funeral an almost unbelievable assortment of people, ranging from a skycap to a prominent politician, stood up before the group and talked of their respect and admiration for this young man. How could he have made so many friends from so many different walks of life in so short a time? I thought to myself, he must have died young because his work here was done. His life had touched the lives of more people than most of us will by the time we are eighty. He had already fulfilled his purpose on earth. He had made the world a better place. So, God let him come home early.

Then, I thought about my small circle of acquaintances, my very few good friends, and the absence of any truly close personal relationships in my life. I knew people scattered all across the country, I had gotten dozens of get-well cards from many of them during my illness, but didn’t know any of these people very well. I had my brothers and sister and a few good friends with whom I worked. But I had almost no friends from the past, no really close, life-long friends. I had divorced the only friend I had known for very long.

I still didn’t feel I was ready to get married again, but I definitely needed to open my heart and my soul to more people. Otherwise, it might be a long time before my work here on earth would be done – a long time before I got to go Home. I sent Ellen an e-mail asking if she would like to go out for dinner and a movie and to discuss the possibility of our becoming friends. I knew it was possible that this would lead to something more, but honestly, I was just looking for a friend. In the course of the evening, I learned that Ellen and I have very similar backgrounds. She had grown up on a dairy farm in Wisconsin, was married for twenty years, lived in several different states, then was divorced, and had lived in Seattle for a while before moving to Missouri. She had a brother who lived in Columbia. She also had a daughter, Dina, about the same age as my twin daughters.

Ellen and I were married about a year later. She has since become a very important part of my new life. She has been the friend that I was looking for, but much more. She has brought the peacefulness to my life that I had never been able to find. She has supported my efforts to bring

the economic, social, and ethical dimensions of my life together in balance and harmony.

I knew financial security was a priority for her when we married, but she has never questioned my desire to retire as soon as I was eligible, although it meant that my income would be cut almost in half. She understood that I needed the freedom of retirement to pursue my new mission in life. She is a reserved person, but she has welcomed my family and my friends into our home, and sometimes goes with me on my professional trips, meeting new people and taking an interest in what I am trying to do. I know that it takes many years to build a good marriage, but I am confident that we are well on our way. She supports me when I bring spirituality into my work and into my relationships, and understands that I feel morally obligated to write and to say things that at times make some other people uncomfortable. She helps give me confidence that the world can indeed become a better place.

One of my last major professional assignments with the University was as Co-chair of the University Extension Diversity Task Force. The task force was diverse in its membership, with respect to race, gender, age, and academic background. The group included faculty and staff from Lincoln University, a historically African-American institution, as well as from the University of Missouri. I am sure I was asked to join the task force because they needed the diversity that an “old, white man” from the College of Agriculture would add to the group. Also, I had been frequently asked to accept this sort of assignment, I suspected, because I was one of the few members of the faculty who would take on such uncomfortable tasks.

My seven years with the Diversity Task Force were among the most productive and rewarding experiences of my professional career. In fact, we received the USDA national Certificate of Recognition for Diversity Work. I also formed lasting personal friendships with several fellow task force members. But perhaps more to the point, through my work on the diversity task force, I learned to respect and value cultural differences among groups of people, without discriminating among individuals within those groups. I knew that it was wrong to discriminate, but I had not learned to appreciate and value which arises from our cultural differences. Positive relationships depend upon our accepting and valuing differences among people.

The Diversity Task Force took its work seriously. We challenged the university administration to do things that they had never done before and would never have done without our prodding. We forced the institution to look at itself critically and to admit instances in which discrimination

had been institutionalized. We asked the institution to change voluntarily, from within. We realized the enormity of our mission – we were trying to change ways of thinking that had been engrained into human civilization over thousands of years. Occasionally someone would ask, “Do you all really think you are going to change the world?” Invariably, someone in our group would answer with something to the effect, “Yes, we are going to change the world. It has to be changed. If we don’t do it, then who will?”

In this spirit, I am bringing this book to an end. Do I think I can change the world? You bet I can, and so can you! The world can be a better place, and must become a better place if humanity is to survive. The things we are doing now quite simply are not sustainable over the long run. We are systematically destroying human civilization and we are destroying our natural environment “If we don’t change the world, then who will?”

The world will not be changed through use of economic or political power. Those who hold the power have achieved their positions of power within the context of the world as it is. Thus, they don’t want to change the world, at least not in any fundamental way. Change is most threatening to the most powerful. They have the most to lose. The power to change rests with those of us who might appear to be powerless. The people least threatened by change are those who are weak, because they have the least to lose.

The powerful keep their power only by maintaining the illusion that the weak will suffer most from change. The rich and powerful use a variety of means to keep the masses economically and psychologically vulnerable. They instill a fear of change among those who have the most to gain and hope that their fear will cloud their common sense. We – the common, ordinary people – have the power to change the world. Like Scott McKinley, each of us has an opportunity to touch the lives of many other people during our lifetime. As the old gospel song goes, “If we can help somebody as we go along, if we can cheer somebody with a word or song, if we can keep somebody from going wrong, then our living shall not be in vain.” We have the power to change the world. We need only find the courage to confront our fears and to rely on our common sense.

Lasting change must arise from within the people. We can’t enforce laws to protect the natural environment from exploitation, even if we could pass them, unless the people feel a strong sense of stewardship. We can’t enforce laws to protect people from exploitation by other people, even though we have them, until the people share a strong sense of compassion and caring. As Barry Goldwater said, “We can’t *legislate*

conscience.” Laws can help create awareness of problems and can demonstrate the potential impact of our changes in conscience. We can *legislate* exposure and exposure to something different can change conscience. But ultimately, people always find ways around laws that don’t reflect the will of the people. Lasting change must arise from the common will.

The most that laws can possibly do is enforce the consensus of the many upon the few who refuse to conform or participate in processes of civilized society. A change in the Constitution, can’t create a new national consensus, it can only document that a new consensus has been reached. The revolution will be won, not because we have changed the Constitution, but because the people reached a consensus that allowed the Constitution to be changed. Changes in laws, rules, constitutions, and other formal codes of behavior will be lasting only if they reflect changes in the hearts of the minds of the people. Lasting change must be rooted in the hearts and minds of the people.

To change the world, however, we need only change ourselves. We need only change who we are. What we do arises from who we are. We are human beings, not human doings. We can’t change who we are by changing what we do. But once we change who we are, we will quite naturally change what we do. We need only break the old bad habits. In fact, once we change who we are, we won’t be comfortable until we change what we do to make it conform to our new being. And most important, when we change who *we* are and change what *we* do, we will have changed the *world*. By changing our part, we will have changed the whole.

What real differences can one person, a few people, or even quite a few people make in the world? There are so many people in the world – or in a nation, or even in most communities. What difference can one or a few of us possibly make? These are logical, rational questions, but logic and rationality do not necessarily make them important or relevant. Quoting Margaret Mead, a noted 20th century American anthropologist, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” She wasn’t talking about a few powerful people forcing others to change. She was talking about the small groups of thoughtful, committed people who changed their own lives, and by so doing, set in motion chain-reactions of influence, that ultimately changed the world.

Every major social, political, or religious movement has begun with a small group of thoughtful, committed people who believed they could change the world. Christianity began with a young itinerant Jewish

preacher and twelve disciples from very ordinary backgrounds. The modern concept of Democracy began in ancient Greece and Rome where the self-governing groups were so small that each person could speak and vote on each issue. The American Revolution was initiated by a handful of radicals in the Continental Congress, who were unable to mount a majority, until one man, Thomas Paine, wrote the pamphlet, *Common Sense*, and asked whether “a continent should continue to be ruled by an Island.”¹ One man with common sense joined in supporting a few others, their vision spread, and the world was forever changed.

It takes courage to bring about revolution. The defenders of the status quo typically are powerful and may become ruthless when challenged. Confrontation, conflicts, frustrations, and failures often mark the road to ultimate success. Most of the founding fathers of America, those who pledged their lives and their fortune to the cause of revolution, ended up losing their fortunes, and some losing their lives, but they won the revolution. In the word of Susan B. Anthony, a leader of the women’s suffrage movement in the U.S., “Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputation and social standing, never can bring about reform. Those who are really in earnest must be willing to be anything or nothing in the world’s estimation.” One person can help change the world for the better, but only if they have the courage to support their conviction.

How can one person be so powerful? Because we are not separate parts of some collective that we call the world, but instead, we each are a part of a single whole that is the world. If one of us passes away from the earth, we do not still have the same collective, minus one person, but instead, we have a new and different whole – indeed, a new world. We are all interconnected. Everything each of us does affects everyone and everything else. It’s true that any individual action may not change the world very much, at least not right now. But eventually, that one action may help change the world a whole lot. We simply don’t know, we can’t know for sure, just how important each of our actions might be. We do know for sure that everything of any significance that has happened to humanity began with the thoughts and actions of one person – or at most, a small group of thoughtful, committed people.

As I was thinking about how individual actions actually change the world, I came across a book by Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point*.² In the book, Gladwell likens changes that take place within society to the outbreak of epidemics of diseases. In spite of his organismic analogy, he spends most of the book *analyzing* the process of social change, segmenting it into “three rules of epidemics,” as if he were dealing with

some mechanistic process. His mechanistic analysis tends to detract somewhat from an otherwise powerful concept that changes in living systems occur by processes that do not conform to mathematical or mechanical rules of reason and logic. Instead, changes in living systems occur according to a different kind of logic and reason unique to living organisms. Contrary to Gladwell's suggestion that epidemics spread exponentially, as in compound interest, epidemics actually spread in ways that cannot be expressed mathematically. Epidemics spread in ways unique to living systems.

Gladwell's three rules of epidemics include the "law of the few," the "stickiness factor," and the "power of context." The "law of the few" suggests that some types of people are far more effective than are others in starting epidemics of change. George Washington was such a person. His life touched the lives of the many. One key to changing the world is to get a few such people on your side. The "stickiness factor" is a lot like the principle of leverage discussed previously. Some ideas just seem to "stick" while others don't, and most important, the difference between those that do and don't are oftentimes very small and seemingly insignificant. So, one key to changing the world is to keep tinkering with common sense ideas until you find a way of saying them that rings true. Thomas Paine was such a person. His words inspired people to action.

Finally, the "power of context" suggests that ultimately whether or not an idea becomes an epidemic depends not so much on who spreads it, or its basic appeal, but whether or not the world is ready for it. The efforts of George Washington and Thomas Paine would have been all for naught, if the people of America had not been ready for revolution. The good news is, if the world is ready for change, you don't have to have a George Washington leading it, or a Thomas Paine supporting it, all you need is small group of thoughtful, committed people who realize that they can change the world.

Tocqueville, in the early 1800s, suggested that revolutions would be far less frequent in democracies than in oligarchies because in democracies people are more nearly equal, both in wealth and in opportunity.³ When everyone is sharing in the bounty, everyone has something to lose from anything that disrupts the status quo. Also, when everyone has a realistic opportunity to join the ranks of the wealthy and influential, it is difficult to mount a revolution against wealth and influence. He also thought that revolution would be more difficult to initiate within democracies because a strong democratic government represents the will of the majority, rather than the rule of the privileged few.

However, Tocqueville, as indicated previously, warned that a corporate, industrial oligarchy might reemerge if Americans failed to remain vigilant. And, he believed that the rule of the majority might become far more powerful, and tyrannical, than the rule of any monarch. If either happened, he believed the likelihood of a revolution would be raised.

Tocqueville's fears were well founded. An industrial oligarchy quite clearly has emerged and has fundamentally transformed our American democracy. Our democracy no longer assures equity in either wealth or opportunity. The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and there is no serious attempt by government even to address issues of economic equity. Opportunities are becoming even more inequitable than is wealth, and there is no serious effort by government to address issues of social justice. The power of our strong central government no longer reflects the will of the broad majority, but instead the will of the narrow, corporate oligarchy. Growing inequities in wealth and opportunity, coupled with corporate domination of government, are creating a national context that is ripe for revolutionary change. Today, far more people have far less to lose and far less hope of joining the ranks of the economic and political elite. Radical change to them is both less threatening and more urgent – even Tocqueville might well agree.

The "tipping point" in an epidemic occurs at the point where the spread of a disease actually *accelerates the rate* at which the disease is spreading. At the tipping point, each new case not only results in some multiple or geometric expansion of new cases, but also adds to the size of the expansion factor. Each new case brings in new victims who are increasingly effective in spreading diseases. Each new case increases the stickiness of the disease as it adapts to the weaknesses of its victims. Each new case creates a more hospitable context or environment for the next, as it weakens the resistance and increases the vulnerability of those who must now care for the sick. Before reaching the tipping point, the disease is present but still manageable. Beyond the tipping point, it is uncontrollable – it is destined to run its course.

Epidemics most certainly are not limited to diseases or physical ailments. The Great Depression of the 1930s was a classic example of an economic epidemic running rampant through a sick society. A wildfire becomes an epidemic when its towering flames began to alter the physical climate, accommodating its continuing rage, and driving those who would fight it into retreat. Nor are epidemics limited to physical or social maladies. Gladwell uses the example of the recent reduction of crime in New York City as a positive epidemic. Society can experience

uncontrollable outbreaks of *wellness* and *goodness* where good things accelerate the rates of increasing health and happiness.

A rapid economic expansion is a prime example of a positive economic epidemic. At some point, each bit of positive economic news begins to accelerate the rate of expansion. Without intervention by the Fed in the form of hikes in interest rates, the economy might well continue spiraling out of control upwardly until it peaks and collapses. Such an expansion is not a rational, logical economic occurrence – it is an epidemic. So, epidemics occur in social, economic, and physical phenomena, and epidemics can break out in positive as well as negative directions.

I believe that American society is vulnerable to an *epidemic of common sense*. I think we could see an outbreak at any time that could sweep across this country like a wildfire. The people of this country are sick and tired of social and ecological exploitation by an industrial, corporatist society. They just don't yet realize the true source of their tired and run-down feeling. The social context is right for an epidemic. Society is vulnerable to the spread of the germ of common sense, and once started, it would be virtually impossible to stop. Everyone possesses a genetic vulnerability to this germ, because we all have common sense, regardless of how long it has been since we used it. Once we start feeling good about using it again, there will be no turning back.

Common sense within today's society is like a growing infection. There are quite a number of folks that never quit using their common sense – in spite of everything the scientifically elite and economically powerful have done to dissuade them. This country has always had a low-grade infection of common sense. Recently, however, an increasing number of people, some described in previous chapters, have gone through personal revolutions and have returned to relying on common sense as a means of putting purpose and meaning back into their lives. I count myself among this most fortunate group of people. Still greater numbers have joined into the various social movements that I have attempted to group under the conceptual umbrella of sustainability. The infection is growing to a point where it could break out as an epidemic at any time. That is why each person is so important. At some unknown point, the common sense infection will reach its tipping point, and then, the action of one additional person will cause it to explode into a full-blown epidemic.

At the tipping point, more people of influence will begin to influence still more people of influence with the common sense message of the necessity of building a more sustainable society for a more desirable

quality of life. I recently heard Paul Hawkins, author of the popular book, *Ecology of Commerce*, say that he has stopped talking so much about ecological and environmental issues and has started talking a lot more about quality of life.⁴ He wants to focus on the higher quality of life that arises from ecologically and socially responsible living. We are all searching for *sticky* ways of sharing the concept of sustainability, so people can understand the message.

But most important, the tipping point will come when enough people create a social context for change – when enough people find the courage to challenge the conventional wisdom of logic and rationality and to rely instead on the true wisdom of common sense. The tipping point will come when enough people realize that their lives are not being made better as they get more *stuff*, but instead would be better if they spent more time with family and friends and left something more of nature for the next generation. The tipping point will come when enough people understand that the promises of the economic short-run self-interest are false, when they begin striving to balance the economic, social, and ecological dimensions of their lives. As each of us changes our little part of the world, we change world context, and we will move the world closer to the common sense tipping point. We can't all be opinion shapers, we can't all be wordsmiths, but we can all change our little piece of the world. That's all we need to do.

How can I be so sure that the world is nearing a time of revolutionary change? I can't be positive, but I can have hope. Hope is grounded in the *possibility* of something better, not the *certainty* of something better. But, we only need hope, not certainty, to motivate us to continue to work toward a better world, for ourselves and for others, both now and in the future. I have hope that we are nearing a time of revolution that quite literally will change the world. And hope is all I need.

In the words of Vaclav Havel, the writer, reformer, and President of the Czech Republic:

"Hope is not the same as joy when things are going well, or the willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously headed for early success, but rather an ability to work for something to succeed. Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It's not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out. It is this hope, above all, that gives us strength to live and to continually try new things, even in conditions that seem hopeless.

*Life is too precious to permit its devaluation by living pointlessly, emptily, without meaning, without love and, finally, without hope."*⁵

When we look around us, we might see little evidence of a new revolution. People seem to be too busy working and shopping to pay much attention to other people or to the natural environment. Empathy and ethics may seem to be losing ground to selfishness and greed. Things are not necessarily going well and there may be little reason for joy. But as long as we have the ability to continue believing in and working for something better, there is hope.

More and more people are becoming disillusioned with materialism as the guiding principle for their lives and for society. More and more people are turning to friends and family to fill the emptiness that can never be filled by more *stuff*. More and more people are turning to spirituality in search of purpose and meaning for their lives. More and more people are learning that a life of quality is a life of balance and harmony. Their numbers may still be few and there may be little indication of early success. But, these people have the willingness and ability to continue working for success, no matter what the odds. In their commitment, there is hope.

There might seem to be little reason for optimism. The corporate interests are so powerful – politically and economically – they seem to control everything. How can the people ever again expect to prevail against such odds? But, hope does not depend on our conviction that we will eventually prevail, just the possibility that we might. We need only be convinced that what we are doing makes common sense, regardless of how things eventually turn out. When we live lives of purpose and meaning, we live lives of hope. When we base our life decision on common sense rather than conventional wisdom, we live lives of hope.

Hope is the possibility that something good could happen. It is this hope that gives us the strength to challenge the conventional wisdom, to disrupt the status quo, and to advocate revolution. Hope makes us the agents of change, gives us the ability to communicate our vision to others, and helps us move the world nearer the tipping point of revolutionary change. Even if logic and rationality indicate that our cause is hopeless, our common sense tells us that something good can always happen. Our common sense tells us never to give up hope for something better. Life is simply too precious to live without hope.

It seems like a long time since I awoke from that restless dream and discovered that my heart had stopped beating for a while. I know now that the transition in my life had begun years earlier, but the day I came back to life will always remain in my mind as a turning point in my life. It was the day when I realized that I had something important left to do with my life, but that I had better be getting on with it. I knew I was going to live for at least a while longer, but I wasn't going to live forever.

Since that day, I have lived a life of hope. I have been healthier than I had been in years. I still jog fifteen miles or so a week and I cut at least part of my winter wood supply. I get a physical checkup every year, and continue to be in good physical condition for a person my age. My heart is working reasonably well with no indications that my arteries are re-clogging. My life is not always a life of joy or optimism and the odds of success at times still seem slim. I sometimes awaken in the morning and wish my work here on earth was done. But, I have never lost the ability to continue working and pursuing my newly found purpose in life. I have remained convinced that what I am doing makes sense, regardless of how it turns out. I have learned to live with hope.

I love my wife, and I have hope that our love will only grow stronger and deeper over many years to come. I love my daughters and I have hope that I can find ways to make the important connections that we didn't make earlier because I was too busy doing less important things. I also love my extended family and a handful of other people scattered around the country who have been important to my life. Regardless of whether I ever see or hear from some of them again, I will always wish them the best in everything that they do. These relationships add tremendously to the quality of my life.

I have faith that my life has purpose and meaning. I have faith that we will build a more sustainable agriculture that will help sustain human life on earth. I have faith we will find the way to a higher quality of life as we learn to live with harmony and balance among the personal, interpersonal, and spiritual dimensions of our lives. I have faith that we will build a sustainable economy as we find harmony and balance among the individual, social, and ecological economies. I have faith in the higher order of things, within which we humans can learn to live in balance and harmony. I have faith that somehow my life has purpose and meaning within this order.

The purpose and meaning of life is rooted in common sense. Faith, hope, and love are not rational, logical feelings – they are not rooted in science but in common sense. Our common sense informs us that a life without faith, hope, and love is a life without meaning or purpose. Our

common sense tells us that a life of selfishness and greed is not a life of love. Our common sense tells us that a life with no sense of stewardship for God's creation is not a life of faith. Our common sense tells us that a life that centers only on what we can get for ourselves, here and now, is a life without hope.

Our common sense is our common connection with the higher power – our source of insight into the higher order of things. Our soul is our connection to our common sense – the sense that we share with all soulful people. Through my soul, I know that my life will have meaning as long as I remain committed to a life of common sense. Through my soul, I know that the purpose of my life is to make the case for common sense.

My purpose in writing this book is that of a sower. I have attempted to sow the seeds of revolution. I have identified the enemy, I have painted a positive vision for the future, and I have pointed out the necessity and inevitability of our ultimate victory, if we can find the courage to rely on our common sense. But if this revolution is to be won, it must become our revolution, not just mine. I don't expect you to accept my beliefs as your beliefs of what's true and right; you have to sense those things for yourself. I would have been wasting my time and yours if I had tried to develop a step-by-step set of instructions to follow in developing a more sustainable lifestyle. The suggested further readings at the end of this book provide a wealth of potentially useful suggestions, but it's up to you to decide what you want to do and how you want to do it. I have only sown the seeds, but you must bring them to life and nurture them to maturity.

Why should you believe what you have read? I certainly haven't tried to convince you with a lot of data, facts, or expert opinions. For the most part, I have simply written what I believe to be true and right; I have shared my common sense. I really don't expect you to believe what I have written, unless it makes sense to you. If even some of what I have written makes sense to you, then I expect you to rely on your common sense – not conventional wisdom or expert opinions – to begin thinking about what you sense to be true and right, and thinking about what you ought to do about it. I have confidence that a world rooted in the common sense of common people will be a world in which people will find a sustainable quality of life.

This is not my revolution to fight and win, it is ours, but it is mine to help begin. My job is to sow the seeds of revolution, but even in this, I am far from alone. The seeds of this revolution are being sown by thousands, perhaps even millions, of people, in all walks-of-life, from all around the world. All I have done here is to gather some bits and pieces

of wisdom of these revolutionaries, by whatever means they came to me. I have attempted to prepare a seedbed and plant those seeds in the fertile ground of open minds. That's what I do nowadays – day in and day out, in all aspects of my professional life. That's my purpose. I am a sower. I sow seeds of revolution, as I make the case for common sense.

THE SOWER

The sower sows seeds of wisdom
Wisdom not his own
Wisdom gleaned from other's fields
From crops God has grown

The sower's harvest season
Comes when the planting ends
Time now to wait for God to grow
New seed to plant again

A few seeds now have opened
A few frail seedlings here and there
But, were it not for weeds and grass
The field would look brown, dead, and bare

The ground is hard from too much rain
And cracked by too much sun
There is very little now to show
For all the sower's done

Should he crack the crust, attack the weeds,
Or plow and plant again?
Will there ever be a harvest?
Or has his planting been in vain?

But the sower's work is over
'Til growing season's end
And then it's time to gather seeds
Enough to plant again

For the sower's time of harvest
Comes when the planting's done
That's when he reaps the gift of faith
That God's work has begun

The sower's work is man's work
He sows in faith that crops will grow
The miracles of life and growth
Are beyond man, for God to know

The sower leaves the struggling crop
Moves on to plant again
He sows in faith that God will do
What can't be done by man.

(John Ikerd)

Jesus used the sower in several of His parables. In Matthew (13:3-10) he said, "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they had not much soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty. He, who has ears, let him hear."

Some of the seeds that I attempted to sow have fallen along the path – devoured in the rewriting and editing processes. Some seeds sown in this book will fall on rocky ground. Those will fail to take root and will wither away under the heat of day-to-day life. But, others will fall on good soil and will bring forth a harvest of manifold – a harvest of hope that will become an epidemic of change, and eventually, a common sense revolution. "Those, who have ears, let them hear."

¹ Thomas Paine. 1776. Common Sense. Reprinted by Dover Publications, Inc. Mineola, NY.

² Gladwell, Malcolm. 2000. The Tipping Point, Little, Brown, and Company, Boston, New York, London.

³ Alex de Tocqueville. 1835. Democracy in America, reprinted on 2000 by Bantam Books, New York, NY.

⁴ Hawken, Paul. 1993. The Ecology of Commerce, HarperCollins Publishing, New York, New York.

⁵ Vaclav Havel. 1990. Disturbing the Peace. First Vintage Edition, 1991. Vintage Books, Random House Inc. New York, NY. (Chapter 5).