

Royal Lessons

by CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

Welshman, Richard Hughes said, 'You have to walk with the cows. If you don't go to look at them, see their condition and that they're well, then the technology can't do it for you.'

He talked about robots milking the cows and he said, 'The problem with that is that farmers thought the robots would do it all but they don't - they only milk the cows; they don't care for them. So, the cows being milked by robots are often not well managed. Farmers need to watch their cows and see to them themselves.'

In answer to our question: after all the messing about with nature that is being done with the breeding of cows, are they better cows? He answered, 'No.'

This increasingly techno-centric world is just another whirl of our making the same mistakes we have been making for centuries; discovering more ways to mechanize ourselves with such success that our very clever inventions come back to bite us. For some reason, which none of us can really understand, the bigger and better the technology, the more harm is inflicted on our environment and ourselves.

What is strangest about this is that we don't get it and we don't stop inventing things, the success of which will cause huge harm. The worst offenders and best example are the automobile and computers.

You can fill in the blanks pretty readily yourselves by simply looking at the environmental chaos caused by the automobile and the need for oil to fuel them, which has led to the need for oil for so much more. Our whole approach to transportation is crazy and needs to be completely re-vamped but, while the cost of taking that huge step can be calculated, the cost of not doing so cannot.

An astonishing statistic that came to light here at the Royal, is that a terrifying 44% of children under one year old are playing with some sort of smart technology, damaging their cognition, perception and small motor skills.

We seem to be a species of extremes. Even though we long for peace and some quiet, some adventure, some change, some continuity, balance in other words, what we constantly deliver unto ourselves is war or battles at least; within our communities, noise and discord; now uncontrolled change, where normal no longer exists and every day brings new rules for conversation, a steady stream of confusion.

Do you think you have control on your own corner of the world, how you feel, what you know? Think again. By this afternoon, there will be differences.

The broad sweep of the forgoing is not absolute. There are chinks in the armour here at the Royal. My neighbours, about whom there is information in the feature about the Royal in this issue, are offering for sale hand knit, hand woven woolen products from Peru and next to that, hand made leather products from Canada. Things made by hand with care and time. Things of quality by people being paid to do the work, not in sweat shops, in buildings that are dangerous.

They produce lots of goods, to cover the demand but the attention to quality is not sacrificed for the sake of commerce.

A stroll through the agricultural area of this agricultural winter fair will bring you to farmers who know the risks of carrying on the same ways, who are looking forward with the knowledge of history, to a cleaner, wiser way to grow food, a healthier way for us to eat. Even the meat based farmers know that better care for their animals means healthier lives for the rest of us.

Beside the largest pumpkin and squash you might ever have seen, there are organic farmers there to promote the practice of returning to pre-pesticide days with practicality, proving beyond doubt that organic farming is truly more productive, as well as better for the environment and our digestive systems; as well as actually tasting better.

According to Charlie Johnstone, CEO of the Royal, other kinds of farming has its say here too. Information, as long as it is truthful, is always a great thing. The Royal does not take sides, as it were, Mr. Johnstone was clear to say. It leaves the visitors to decide for themselves.

Well, there is wisdom in swash and buckle too and all this and the rest can be found at the Animal Theatre here where the shows are included in the cost of the entrance ticket. What is saner and more fun than smart dogs (no technology) racing through obstacles, herding sheep, utsmartin their handlers? There are many other entertainments in that theatre - come and see.

The horses dance, jump, are clever, beautiful, kind both in the Animal Theatre and the Coliseum.