

The Objective

By Wendell Berry

Even while I dreamed I prayed that what I saw was only fear and no foretelling,
for I saw the last known landscape destroyed for the sake
of the objective--the soil bulldozed, the rock blasted.
Those who had wanted to go home would never get there now.
I visited the offices where for the sake of the objective,
the planners planned at blank desks set in rows.
I visited the loud factories where the machines were made
that would drive ever forward toward the objective.
I saw the forest reduced to stumps and gullies;
I saw the poisoned river--the mountain cast into the valley;
I came to the city that nobody recognized because it looked like every other city.
I saw the passages worn by the unnumbered footfalls of those
whose eyes were fixed upon the objective.
Their passing had obliterated the graves and the monuments
of those who had died in pursuit of the objective
and who had long ago forever been forgotten,
according to the inevitable rule that those who have forgotten
forget that they have forgotten.
Men and women, and children now pursued the objective as if nobody ever had pursued it before.
The races and the sexes now intermingled perfectly in pursuit of the objective.
The once-enslaved, the once-oppressed,
were now free to sell themselves to the highest bidder
and to enter the best paying prisons in pursuit of the objective,
which was the destruction of all enemies,
which was the destruction of all obstacles,
which was to clear the way to victory,
which was to clear the way to promotion,
to salvation,
to progress,
to the completed sale,
to the signature on the contract,
which was to clear the way to self-realization, to self-creation,
from which nobody who ever wanted to go home would ever get there now,
for every remembered place had been displaced;
every love unloved,
every vow unsworn,
every word unmeant
to make way for the passage of the crowd of the individuated,
the autonomous, the self-actuated, the homeless with their many eyes
opened toward the objective which they did not yet perceive in the far distance,
having never known where they were going,
having never known where they came from.