

IT'S A MATTER OF ECONOMY

When I re-visited England and France this summer I was amazed once again at how a sense of economy and a conservation of resources are built into their way of life. Every vehicle on the roads is so *small* and even the roads are small. There are *no* SUV's! We heard that, in England, people were upset that forests and the landscape would be disturbed when a new highway went through. There was such a public outcry that the project was stopped. People walk and ride bicycles much more than we do here, and not just to stay fit!

In France, in the Alsace region, there were flushers for the toilets, which consisted of a simple knob for turning on and off the water. You were expected to use only as much as you needed. Lights in public spaces were often on timers, so that you had to move quickly or be prepared to push the button again! In St Sulpice, the famous church in Paris where many well-known organists served, the ancient, winding, twisting stone staircase to the organ loft had a light with a timer on it. You dared not stop to rest or you would very likely be plunged into darkness. I can imagine the organists of old climbing those stairs with music and a lantern.

In the wine region of Alsace, there are beautiful farms and vineyards as far as the eye can see, but no golf courses, which, we were told, would be a waste of good farmland!

It was hot in Europe, and there is very little air conditioning. We had none in England and precious little in France. In our hotel in Paris only the rooms were air-conditioned, not the lobby or common rooms.

The economical approach to life, however, did not extend to scimping on the care and upkeep of their organs, even those in small villages where the people seemed to live very humbly. Everywhere we went, there were church members who proudly told us about the instruments in their churches, even telling us their history and of the famous people who had played them. They took personal pride in the music and in the health and beauty of the instruments that played it. They were pleased and proud that we had come from so far to see, hear, and to play the organs in their churches. And what a joy that was!

It seems to me, however, that, in their lavish care of their instruments, they were actually practicing true economy in that they were investing in the future, never a small matter. I will always remember playing a service on a new electronic organ with all the bells and whistles, which had been installed in a church where I once served. It was placed back-to-back with a historic tracker action pipe organ dating from the nineteenth century. In the course of the service (during communion, actually), the new electronic organ stopped playing, went "dead." I went over to the old tracker organ, which had been sadly neglected, found the lever for the blower, which brought up the air immediately, and finished the service. I consider that organ to be an example of a sound investment, made with a sturdy sense of true economy.

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