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Teachers and Farmers

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TEACHERS AND FARMERS
A Metaphor Concerning Education
or
A Child's Garden of Children's Gardens

Most of the trees in North Dakota
 have been planted, precisely, by hand.
 By hand. Precisely.

We are careful about growth here.
 We use it seriously.

(As a tired and retired ex-superintendent
 once told me in the Holiday Inn in Bismarck:
 "Why should school be fun? Life isn't!")

You see, there are the winters
 and the wind
 and we need trees for fences,
 new green growth for walls,
 seedlings to protect ourselves.

This is a rough-riding open state
 and yet we live in the largest shelter-belt
 in the world (they say) but

after picking a speck of Montana
 out of your eye on a windy day
 or watching the top half-inch
 of your property on the move
 to southwest Minnesota - -
 there are other things to concern us.

Here and there a coulee dips with its own broad
 ecology
 or a prairie spring, as out near Inkster, waters
 an untouched woods,
 and I have even seen whole fields devoted to sun
 flowers!

So, Teachers.

When in the mood to plant them "basic" potatoes
or construct a woods, to make a piece of nature -
everything in "sequence," first the low shrubs,
maybe Russian Olive next, pines in the middle,
and so forth, I repeat

when in that mood - remember

fields of sun flowers turning in slow time
and those wild gulches where life unlike our own
continues, in its ravine variety.

Robert King, New School, Summer, 1971.