

ORGANIC LIVING

By
Robert Rodale

\$200 STARTS YOUR MICRO-BUSINESS

Suddenly, thousands of Americans are finding themselves with more spare time — and not by choice. Unemployment is only one source of idleness. Lack of spare cash for travel and expensive entertainment is also an important factor.

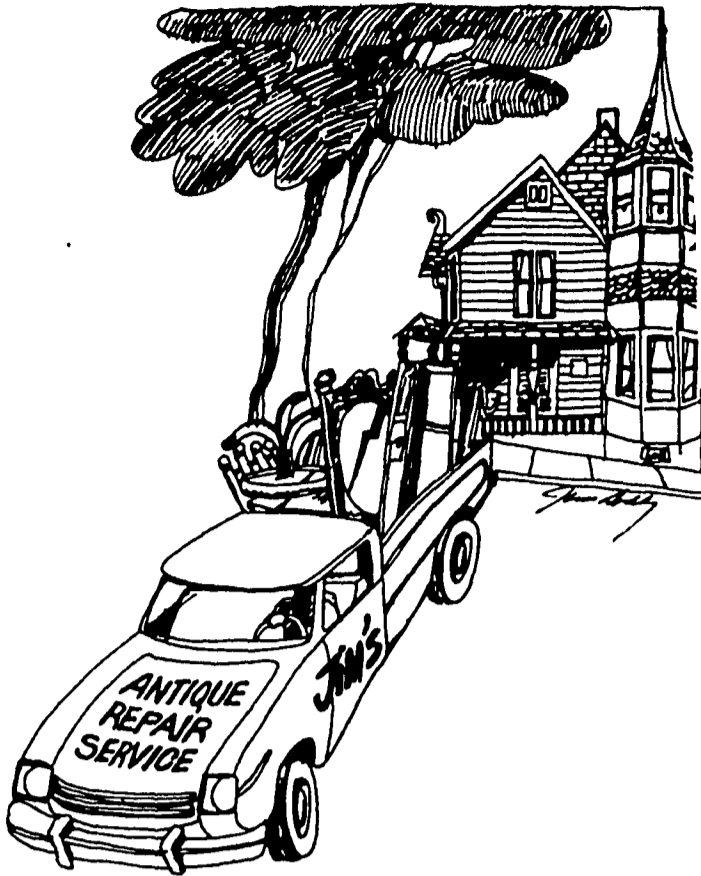
Although spare time is growing, the idea that it can be freely wasted may soon be hopelessly old-fashioned. In inflationary times, human capital goes up in value as the currency declines. In other words, as long as you can do something productive, you will be able to buy the necessities of life.

Millions of people have already learned that lesson and are trying to do things with their spare time that will give them alternative income sources. Craft activity is booming, as people seek to develop new skills and turn out useful products in their spare time.

Spare time activity can be commercialized, too. I'm convinced that many people can make good spare-time income and find enjoyment also by running what I call micro-businesses. They're ultra-small, have little risk, yet can produce good income and satisfaction. You can enter some micro-business fields with as little as \$200 in capital.

Garden-starting is a great field to enter now. Demand for vegetable gardens is at an all-time high, yet people don't relish the hard work of spading a patch of lawn to get the garden going.

With a good tiller, you can dig up a garden, smooth out



the soil, and even fertilize and plant in a few hours. You don't have to be an expert gardener to get a garden started, although having a basic knowledge of gardening does help. Most important is knowing how to handle a tiller and having access to sources of compost, mulch and organic fertilizers needed to get humus into hardpan soils.

You probably wouldn't get rich being a "garden starter," but it would be a source of additional income where one didn't exist before. And you might wind up carving out a new career for yourself.

There are other jobs that you can do with little capital. For example, a used pick-up truck will put you in the hauling business. You could place notices about your service in conspicuous places such as the community bulletin board in your local supermarket, or a nearby college. Or, you could place a small ad in your local newspaper. Before you start, however, be sure to check with state or local authorities to see if any kind of license is needed.

It shouldn't take long before the word spreads. People who've had a cumbersome piece of old furniture in their basement or attic for a long time may finally find it convenient to have it removed, once they hear about you.

If you're already a home handyman, the obvious answer to your employment situation is to put your talent to use around your neighborhood. Just think of the jobs that are waiting to be done. Someone needs a door hung or a window repaired. Another person's vacuum cleaner is on the blink. Somebody else wants shelves built.

You don't have to be a technician for most repair jobs. The majority are simple, if you have some basic mechanical knowledge. Public library shelves are jammed with repair manuals of one kind or another. So it's an easy matter to get the information. All you have to do is put it to use.

Another "natural" sideline, in view of the rising cost of sugar, is beekeeping. For less than \$100 you can get a hive of bees started that will produce about 100 pounds of honey: Fifty for you to sell and 50 for the bees to keep.

Walter Burkey, a retired mailman who lives in Malvern, PA, has been keeping bees for almost 40 years. He has 21 hives of his own and takes care of another 20 for different people. "I estimate I spend about 12 hours per year per hive," he said. "You've got to know what you're doing, but bees are not a lot of work."

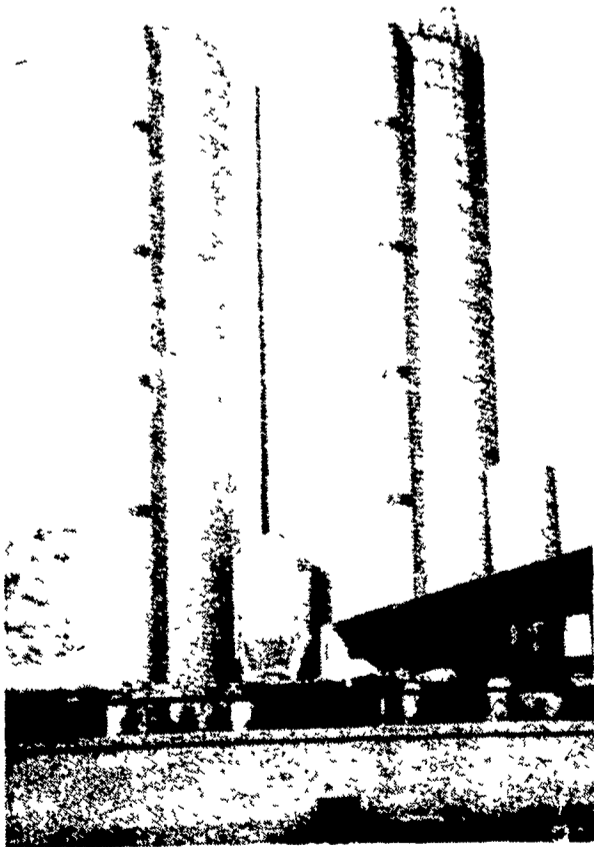
If you decide that beekeeping could be a money-maker for you, it would be worthwhile to research the subject thoroughly before you get started. You'll probably save yourself several headaches and avoid a lot of extra work.

If you stop and think about it for a while, I'm sure you can come up with other ideas to make your idle hours productive. It's important to get out and look for these opportunities. What better time is there than right now?

(Editor's Note: The opinions appearing in "Organic Living" are those of its author, Robert Rodale, an independent columnist. Rodale's comments do not necessarily reflect the thinking of the Lancaster Farming editor or anyone else on the Lancaster Farming staff.)

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