

Both Drs Hiatt and Westing have dwelt particularly on the immediate destruction wreaked by these weapons. Much more difficult to evaluate are the long-range socio-political-cultural aspects. Some scenarios suggest that the loss of life from the collapse of systems of food distribution could exceed that from the effects of the bombs themselves; with mutually assured destruction of the great powers, the impact on the world's political structure is no less unpredictable.

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EDITORIAL

Human Aspirations, Environmental Care, and the Much-needed World Decade of The Biosphere

There is no point in our dwelling further on the physical horrors of over-population, squalor, friction born of crowding, and chronic unemployment and crime. We have all seen, or read about, the ghastly shanty-towns of Latin America and the Far East, and the insanitary slums of the often over-developed West. We stressed such effects of over-crowding in our Autumn issue last year, and have since been reminded repeatedly of the accompanying bestialities of lawlessness, anarchy, and organized terrorism.

But what of the degrading *moral* effects of prolonged hopelessness and, often, homelessness? We are told, almost *ad nauseam*, that our tottering world of Man and Nature needs a 'new international economic order' of sharing. But is the cake really big enough, and would not this mean mainly shelling-out by currently belaboured 'rich' nations to the relatively needy 'poor' ones, with doubtful real advantage to more than a tiny proportion of the populations in the latter? We feel we should help one another all we can, but are not convinced that such sharing is necessarily the best way, any more than that it is by any means the only one.

What seems to us to be most desperately needed is a sense of *belonging to, and hence feeling for, a common cause*. This need used to be satisfied (and still is in certain quarters at least partially) by some religious or moral belief and discipline stemming from it, by the stability of heritable possessions, or by a sense of recognized attainment. But now these are all widely disfavoured, as are many aspects of ethics and common morality—such that discipline is almost a dirty word, and self-discipline has become harder and harder to maintain.

We know, and sometimes admit, that with rare exceptions we are all basically selfish. But a common cause makes us more altruistic, and when we recognize that cause to be the maintenance of our own (and only) life-support—our collective home—we are apt to become vehement crusaders on its behalf. Here let us repeat our editorial thinking of a little more than a year ago: 'For the lasting preservation of Man's and Nature's environment throughout the world, a new thrust is needed involving all peoples, resources, and their development—everywhere. We feel that this might best be furthered through global exhortation and ethical publicization of The Biosphere as our home and *planetary life-support*, which is nevertheless insecure and even threatened in various ways, and which accordingly needs understanding and fostering. Basically it is jeopardized by ever-increasing human populations and their profligate use of the planet's limited resources' (*Environmental Conservation*, Vol. 7, No. 4, p. 257, 1980). More immediately it may be threatened by food and other shortages, and most urgently by an unprecedentedly horrific buildup of nuclear weapons, the use of which could put an end to our civilization and conceivably exterminate life on land and even widely in the oceans. This we stressed in our latest issue.

The Biosphere seems best 'defined as the peripheral envelope of the Earth together with its surrounding atmosphere [as far down and up as] living things exist quite naturally. It thus ranges from the deepest layers of soils and deposits on ocean floors, upwards to the highest levels of the atmosphere which contain any form of life—including Man ... with his unique intelligence and concomitant capabilities. These last circumstances have enabled Man to evolve in recent millennia and emerge especially in the last few decades as the world's *undisputed pandominant*.* But although it seems clear that Man now has the knowledge and means to save his world, he still lacks sufficient urge and collective selflessness to do so' (*Ibid.*). Thus one of the few things that he seems incapable of accomplishing is limiting his own numbers, even though he now has humane means of doing so.

We accordingly adjure governments and leaders not to await some utterly devastating 'ecocalamity of nuclear holocaust, widespread famine, or pandemic disease, such as might finally force the world's residual population [if any] to take the necessary steps to save itself and its successors and what remained of Nature for posterity' (*Ibid.*), but to start preparation forthwith for more positive and timely action which has become imperative owing to the continuing inexorable rise of human population-pressures (demophora).

*All, i.e. globally, dominating.

As a background to satisfying this increasingly urgent need, the planned World Decade of The Biosphere is intended, and seems destined,[†] to inform and educate people throughout the world about The Biosphere and how we humans are all (1) an integral part of it, (2) utterly dependent on it, and yet (3) threatening it by our pressures of numbers and actions. Such world-wide education concerning our planetary life-support is surely a necessary basis for public understanding and due support *inter alia* of such important developments as the work of SCOPE[‡], the World Conservation Strategy, the Man and the Biosphere Programme, and much of the work of UNEP[‡] which we are featuring in our present issue.

Despite claims that may be made by governments, politicians, academics, and yet other leaders, the private sector of business enterprise probably has at its disposal far more human talent, or at least the wherewithal to attract and use it, than any other faction in the entire world. From discussions with some businessmen who understand the concept of Our Biosphere, we are confident that their support for the movement to save it will be forthcoming at least when Man's dependence on it is fully realized; herein lies much of our hope, such as indeed 'springs eternal in the human breast'.

What is needed is a change from the popular image of a negative, non-dividend-paying Biosphere to a positive, *sine qua non* one (without which modern civilizations could not long survive, hope would be groundless, business could not function, and all enterprise would be pointless). Our plans for the Decade are mainly of an educational nature, of which the following 'round dozen' include some that should be eminently capable of enterprising promotion—often on the *sine qua non* basis:

- 1) Publishing and Broadcasting Support by Every Appropriate Means.
- 2) Other Vehicles of Desirable Publicity, including Campaigns of Posters and Stickers.
- 3) Instructive Advertising and Audience-attracting Showmanship.
- 4) Books on The Biosphere and Illustrated Study Manuals.
- 5) Specialist Research and Application.
- 6) Need to Control Human Numbers and Behaviour.
- 7) National Parks, Biosphere Reserves, and Biological Gardens etc.
- 8) Conferences, Meetings, and other 'free' Deliberations.
- 9) Need to Change Human Attitudes.
- 10) Need to Establish Due Ethics and Laws.
- 11) Institutional and Organizational Involvement towards Survival.
- 12) 'Guardians of The Biosphere' Recognition and Awards.

Could not worthy NGOs* or private enterprise take care of some of these needs before it is too late, and meanwhile add others—such as anti-pollution measures, massive revegetation, and collection and recycling of wastes? Further possibilities that spring to mind include 'ethical' firms to replace ones that are closed down for environmental reasons or are rendered unprofitable through environmentalists' actions or satisfaction of their demands; also firms of consultants, teams of monitors, and groups of specialists in environmental management and law.

One can envisage more and more profitable concerns springing up and flourishing in these fields of endeavour—to the lasting benefit of our vulnerable Biosphere, while other aspects of its needed stability are taken care of by good government. Only through sound actions in these vital respects can we aspire to have protractedly sustainable societies—such as are unthinkable without due care for the health of The Biosphere in which they all subsist. Accordingly we plan in our next issue to feature the above-mentioned World Decade of The Biosphere in the prominent manner which it surely deserves.

N.P.

[†]Thus, for example, even before its launching (probably with a 2-pages' *Declaration* on Environment Day [June 5th] this year), the project has been strongly endorsed by world bodies, while two particularly pertinent organizations in North America, namely the National Science Teachers Association and the National Association for Environmental Education have, without prompting from us but to our great gratification, set up special committees to support the Decade, and, in the latter case, is contemplating making it the main theme of their next international conference (in Canada in 1984).

[‡]SCOPE = Scientific Committee On Problems of the Environment of the International Council of Scientific Unions, which in several respects is the world's scientific 'Summit'.

[‡]UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme.

*NGOs = Non-Governmental Organizations, or, as we prefer to call the international ones nowadays, 'INGOs'.

Towards a Universal Declaration of Respect for Nature and The Biosphere

Dean Arthur H. Westing's paper 'A World in Balance', published in last Autumn's issue of *Environmental Conservation*, provides very interesting reading and leads up, in a most convincing way, to an expression of the need for a 'Universal Declaration of Respect for Nature'. It is high time indeed that some order be put into the minds of those people who profess to care about 'Ecology', many of whom fail to see their own involvement and are content to lay the blame on powerful anonymous bodies. One would like to see 'Ecology' taken out of politics

and turned into what could amount to a faith, but under proper scientific leadership.

Dr Westing distinguishes three types of countries: the rich, numbering 27, followed by 43 nations of average wealth and finally by the poor nations. Of these last there must be more than 80. May I be allowed to add a footnote to his figures for the benefit of those readers in rich countries who might feel an undue sense of guilt, and of those in poor countries who might be hasty in apportioning the blame for our world's present predicament?