

EDITORIAL

Biosphere Day, Prizes, and Clubs

The Biosphere, or 'sphere of life', is the 'envelope' encircling our Planet Earth in which any form of life exists naturally. Although it extends from deep in the lithosphere to high in the atmosphere, it is still relatively thin and fragile. As our human and Nature's sole habitat, it is our imperative duty to look after The Biosphere in every possible way as it becomes increasingly threatened from within by too many and too profligate human inhabitants. A large proportion — probably the vast majority — of these would be appalled if they realized what is happening to their collective, overall home and its prospects of prevailing indefinitely to our and our descendants' satisfaction, and a great many would surely do all in their power to safeguard The Biosphere. So the abiding question is, how to inform and warn humanity of this increasingly grave situation.

Unfortunately The Biosphere is not something which we can distinguish and touch in the manner of a threatened plant or animal. Rather is it a fundamental concept and very real entity with a defined existence and finite limits. As such it should be straightforward to explain its significance to intelligent people who would then pass on this 'life gospel' to others. To such ends we started rather many years ago a *World Campaign for The Biosphere*, which 'got somewhere' with such slogans as 'Save Our Biosphere' and appropriate stickers, and in time led to the establishment of the *World Council For The Biosphere*. This had a distinguished Board and held regular meetings until more and more of its functions and intentions were taken on by a multiplicity of *ad hoc* and other bodies. One of its remaining functions is promoting

Biosphere Day

This is intended to remind people throughout the world who are interested in securing a future for their descendents in a liveable world, that our only home and life-support (apart from energy from the Sun) needs constant safeguarding to continue at all equably. In a complementary manner we now have Earth Day early in the year, Environment Day near its middle and, at a suitable interval of time when the Autumn is coming in, Biosphere Day for the vital purpose stated. The day chosen for Biosphere Day is 21 September, which heralds in the somewhat variable Autumn Equinox of equal division of night and day in our Planet's northern hemisphere, and similarly the Spring Equinox in the southern hemisphere, while the *objective* of the event is the quite vital need to remind humanity, regularly each year, of the fragility of our only life-support, with the consequent necessity of safeguarding it looming as our foremost human imperative.

Biosphere Fund and Prizes

An endowment or other fund is sought to support work on The Biosphere — such as that in the *Vernadsky International Centre for Biosphere Studies*, a unit of the Russian Academy of Sciences located at Pushchino in the Moscow Region, and the International Society of Naturalists (INSONA) based on Baroda, India — and also give annual prizes to recognize advances and encourage further work towards safeguarding The Biosphere. These should be a really major Biosphere Prize, unspecified as to theme, and about six satellite prizes for advances in leading aspects of Biosphere studies or allied contributions — in each case sufficient to enable their recipients, whether an individual, group, or institution, to carry further work along the line of that for which the award was being made. The winners of the awards should be announced (and maybe the Prizes presented) each year on Biosphere Day — with dignified publicity further serving the *reminding* function of Biosphere Day. And whereas *the* Biosphere Prize should preferably not be otherwise named or specified, each satellite prize could bear the name of an appropriate sponsor who might well be its donor. Thus we might have, for example, a Nestlé Biosphere Prize for Population Control Advance, and a Ford Biosphere Prize for Energy Conservation.

Biosphere Clubs

These comprise the other means by which we advocate promotion of Biosphere Day and all it stands for. Such Clubs should be situated in, or run from, recognized centres of environmental/conservational learning or at least interest, should be for limited numbers of people desiring to hold group discussions under specialist leaders or with guest speakers *e.g.* over lunch or dinner at suitable time-intervals, and should be 'self-supporting and largely autonomous but fostered and collated by FEC' (*Environmental Conservation*, 20(1), p. 3, 1993). In future, we 'visualize a network of Biosphere Clubs, of the nature of Rotary or Lions Clubs; may they likewise ultimately span the world, foster globally the environmental movement, and bring to everybody the spirit and message of Biosphere Day' (*ibid.*).

Responsible Optimism

Having just brought out a book on *Population and Global Security* (see Notice on reverse of this page) which leads us to feel confident that human existence on Earth is, after all, sustainable, we nevertheless must remember the fear of many that it is not, and the prophesy of some that all life on Earth is doomed. There being no other known source of life in the Universe than Planet Earth, this extreme threat, however remote, places on our species, as evidently the only existing organism with the intelligence of conscious foresight, the tremendous responsibility of safeguarding life — which, for healthy biospheric existence, means conserving all forms and manifestations of life that can possibly be saved for posterity.

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