

## BIO-DYNAMICS IN THE WORLD AND ITS SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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There is a growing awareness on the part of the public of Bio-Dynamic work and by a number of research institutions and government agencies abroad. In many instances this leads to a certain polarisation in attitudes towards Bio-Dynamics. Some expect the B-D movement to give answers to pressing issues while on the other hand a growing opposition is working with biased statements. Following some articles which appeared in leading Swiss newspapers in the winter of 1971/72 about organic and B-D methods of agriculture a motion was put to the Swiss parliament asking that an organic experimental station should be established. Though, as one would expect at this point, the idea was not accepted, an independent group has set out to create possibilities for development and research. A farm is to be taken under B-D management from 1974 onwards and experimental stations and B-D research groups are to be invited to do experimental work and to be involved in development and demonstration. It is becoming increasingly evident that the agricultural systems, which are practised in the developed countries, efficient though they may be as regards yields and to some extent profitability, are wasteful with respect to natural resources. These systems also depend on a huge supply industry which one tends to forget when the statistics report another increase in farm output per labour force. The world's phosphate supplies are fairly well known. Agriculture consumes about 76% of all phosphate mined, but should the present trends in consumption prevail, then some time in the next century the deposits would be exhausted. In a meeting at Hanover University last summer, when members of the B-D movement were present, it was pointed out how much more efficiently B-D farming makes use of the low, but virtually inexhaustible natural phosphate content of soils. Statistics were presented about the results of Bio-Dynamic farms and also from the Haughley experiment of the Soil Association.

In some agricultural schools there is growing interest; recently a doctor's thesis (by U. Abele) was completed in Giessen. Field trials about the effects of organic manuring, the application of B-D preparations (in particular 501), planting and cultivating according to the siderial revolution of the moon, yielded interesting, positive results.

In areas where intensive cropping prevails, nitrate pollution of ground water supplies causes a growing concern. Recently a number of articles and speeches were presented on the Continent suggesting that organic manures rather than chemical fertilisers cause nitrate leaching from cropland. It is generally accepted however, that hay crops, catch crops, etc., substantially reduce nitrate leaching in a given catchment area. Recently, three years of water testing have been completed at a B-D institution in Illinois, U.S.A. It was demonstrated that organic manuring as such reduces the nitrate concentrations in drainage run-off, from 40-50 ppm NO<sub>3</sub>, under chemical treatment to less than 10 ppm NO<sub>3</sub>, under compost treatment.

Although the main laboratory of the B-D Association in North America urgently needs one or two capable, creative young co-workers if it is to continue, there are important developments in various parts of the country. Now in its fourth year, a strong group is being built up in Los Angeles and its vicinity. They offer well received evening courses in the community programme of Pierce College; there is a garden on the campus site for instruction and demonstration; gardens are established and now more land may become available. The Rudolf Steiner Farm school project in

Harlemville-Ghent, NY, in summer, 1973, had completed its first year of activities. There are now functioning, although partially still in their initial stages: the hostel, which every year welcomes classes from the New York Rudolf Steiner School for block periods; a day country Waldorf School, Hawthorne Valley School has started this autumn with four grades; a garden has been established and the farm is gradually being taken into B-D management; a teacher and an agricultural social conference, enlivened by artistic and practical activities has also taken place. Thus a cultural centre is growing, drawing in many people, but it still needs much financial help if it is to grow as fast as the needs call for. Healing impulses, so much needed nowadays, can stream forth from such a centre. The annual B-D public conference at Threefold Farm, NY, was attended by more people than ever before. Conferences and a workshop were also held in Harlemville, Los Angeles, Santa Cruz, Milwaukee and Elkhorn Wisc. this summer. It is rewarding to find, at most of these places, former Emerson College students at work. Following the request of a group of mainly younger gardeners and farmers, a week of study based on the lectures of the Agriculture Course took place in January, 1973, at Faith Homestead in Duxbury, Mass., where John and Helen Philbrick offer opportunities for private gardeners and those interested in crafts. This study week can be looked at as an essential element in the movement which is now rapidly growing stronger. The words which were spoken during this week could be felt as though warmed by the heart forces. This gathering was followed by four other, though shorter, ones during the summer. On the one hand the bio-dynamic impulse has been (and of course will continue to be) carried by those who took it up as Anthroposophists, but also by many who adopted it out of the best of peasant feelings and instincts rooted in tradition. It can be felt that, as the heritage of the past is less and less conveying inner values, so an interest is growing in the spiritual basis of Bio-Dynamics. Indications of this change can be found on the Old Continent and in the New World. It poses an important task for consultants and those places which offer training. The need for technical instruction, that is, about how to grow things, is on the increase. A healthy development calls for inner work towards expressing the of rhythmic working of forces in living nature and the understanding of rhythms. This is the source from where, apart from economical and other considerations, lasting inspiration can come.

(An article by Dr. Koepf on "Farming as a Social Fulfilment appeared in the American journal Bio-Dynamics, spring 1973, which may be borrowed from the BDAA library by members).