

EDITORIAL

Unemployment Should be the World's 'New Broom'

As children we believed that everyone was our friend as well as fundamentally honest; and even now, despite mounting global instability and crime-rates, we are still convinced that most people on Earth are not only straight but also basically decent. (For is it not the natural way to be, at least saving time and avoiding trouble?) This should mean that people would far rather earn their keep than be given their living 'as a matter of right' by the State; thus the unemployed would retain their dignity, remain usefully productive, and continue to play their part in Society—for the general good as well as, surely, their own. For we also believe that most people, at least when living under a free system, have an inherent urge to give some service to their community, provided it can be suitably canalized and duly recognized.

It is now more than seventeen years since, coming out of a period of prolonged university establishment in the Middle East and then West Africa, in both cases terminated by violent revolutions, we realized that the world was in a deteriorating state environmentally, and decided that it was our solemn duty henceforth to do all we could about this insidiously alarming situation. Subsequently the deterioration accelerated and became widely recognized, *inter alia* with the foundation of *ad hoc* journals, including our own. One of our subsequent efforts of warning was through the Reykjavik Imperative on the Environment and Future of Mankind (Anon., 1977), and another was the 'Open Letter' of scientific and environmental leaders in all inhabited continents of the world (Pauling *et al.*, 1982).

These and other efforts by people who really cared were followed by the World Campaign for The Biosphere (Anon., 1982; Polunin, 1982; Worthington, 1982) as a primarily educational device for public enlightenment regarding our global life-support system—to have people everywhere understand how we humans are an integral part of The Biosphere, how we are utterly dependent on it, but how we are threatening it (and consequently our own and Nature's very existence) by our ever-increasing numbers and impact. For although our species constitutes but one of the millions now living on Earth, we are the only one with the mental capacity to change The Biosphere practically at will and risk devastating our Planet Earth.

Mankind being the sole creature with a highly-developed capability to record and disseminate his knowledge, it behoves him to use it for good rather than evil—for saving his world and Nature's rather than destroying it by such means as were described in our last issue (Tolba *et al.*, 1983). For this Man's unique capacities for education—*inter alia* about The Biosphere—would seem to constitute the main hope. But with scientific discovery and its often wanton (or worse) application ever-accelerating, time is not on the side of stability—even with its helpmate, discipline, which too often is lacking. Meanwhile in matters of international conflict and destructive capacity the situation is getting worse and worse, with wars now raging in several regions, and prospects of others on an expanding scale.

One of the most alarming trends of recent years has been the increasing amount of unemployment in many parts of the world. But this, it seems to us, should be turned to the advantage of the environment. The idea of how this might be done is simple, as could be the expedient. Problems of pollution, for example, are commonly local—down to and including the disposal of wastes and clearance of litter. Much the same applies to devegetation and its remedies of reforestation and proper cultivation. These are surely problems—and there are many, many others—which unemployed persons could be invoked widely to tackle, at the same time deriving satisfaction from playing their part for the general benefit, and at least to that extent ceasing to be unemployed. Indeed one would expect that, with suitably effective handling by authorities, citizens would come to feel pride in such participation—for example with attractive uniforms duly supplied, and a competitive spirit duly maintained.

Clearly such a movement—which we could foresee spreading rapidly—would need enlightened planning and dedicated administration for effective execution. And clearly the problems to be tackled, and the means of tackling them, would vary from place to place or at least country to country. Fortunately there are numerous local precedents of the past or currently to study—such as the American Works Program Administration and the Keep Britain Tidy movement. But even as The Biosphere consists of innumerable and often intricately interdependent facets, so should such a movement for the gainful employment of the otherwise unemployed be turned to the global good, and those involved be encouraged to feel due pride in playing their useful part for the benefit of all.

N. P.

REFERENCES

- ANON. (1977). The Reykjavik Imperative on the Environment and Future of Mankind. *Environmental Conservation*, 4(3), pp. 161–3.
- ANON. (1982). Declaration: The World Campaign for The Biosphere. *Environmental Conservation*, 9(2), pp. 91–2.
- PAULING, L., BENAVIDES, F., WAHLEN, F.T., KASSAS, M., VOHRA, B.B. & KNOX, G.A. (1982). Open Letter: To all who should be concerned. *Environmental Conservation*, 9(2), pp. 89–90.
- POLUNIN, N. (1982). Our global environment and the World Campaign for The Biosphere. *Environmental Conservation*, 9(2), pp. 115–21, 2 figs.
- TOLBA, M.K., WESTING, A.H. & POLUNIN, N. (1983). The environmental imperative of nuclear disarmament. *Environmental Conservation*, 10(2), pp. 91–5.
- WORTHINGTON, E.B. (1982). World Campaign for The Biosphere. *Environmental Conservation*, 9(2), pp. 93–100.