

## 2. Education and Communication

Our Study Group 6\*, on Communication and Education, may be the last in sequence but is by no means the least. Indeed, following our friend Robert Lamb, whom I asked to speak first, as he is a practical and practising expert on communications, I scarcely need to emphasize to such an enlightened group that *education is of the essence*, while, especially through effective communication, good and soundly-based environmental education is quite one of the greatest and most pressing needs of our time. Nor do I need to stress to you that, for concerted action in such needs as effective pollution control, the wise use of fast-disappearing raw-materials, maintenance of resources such as productive agricultural land, and dozens if not hundreds of other matters of grave concern in our beleaguered world, both good communication of known facts and information, and due assimilation and effective action by suitably educated leaders, are well-nigh essential. Thus our respective topics of education and communication come together as was surely foreseen by our perceptive hosts.

The topic — indeed emerging discipline — of environmental education is increasingly served by special journals and older general ones such as my own, *Environmental Conservation*, and by specialist societies such as the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) and its Australian and Indian Counterparts, as well as by special courses in an increasing number of universities and other institutions. But these largely remain discrete and often aloof, so it has long seemed to us that a small collating office — not a large dictating machine — is needed which we have suggested might well be situated on the delightful campus of the International Academy of The Environment in the Geneva suburb of Conches. Indeed nearly a decade ago, alongside the World Council For The Biosphere (WCB), a Transatlantic Group of us founded an International Society for Environmental Education (ISEE). But somehow this has never really got going, though the need I feel has grown apace in recent years.

Consequently it has been a matter of considerable satisfaction to have been able to encourage a young Brazilian friend, with experience also in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, and now a Research Fellow in the Department of Environmental Science of a modern English university, to convene and run an International Workshop on Environmental Education as a Parallel Event to UNCED, the so-called Earth Summit, on the 4th, 5th, and 6th, of June in Rio de Janeiro — which I hope any of you who are interested and there will attend. It is announced as an 'Important Prospect' on page 89 of the Spring issue of our aforementioned Journal and has the following three main objectives:

- to provide an opportunity for persons and institutions involved in environmental education (EE) to describe its current status in their countries;
- to enable discussions to take place on the problems faced by different countries in the implementation of EE programmes, thus motivating the exchange of experiences; and
- to adopt a framework of action at an international level, with the proposed creation of an International Council For Environmental Education, leading objectives of which would be to provide advice on the preparation, execution, and evaluation, of EE programmes, and to advise institutions and governments on their execution and due monitoring.

Of the third of these objectives we have special hopes — that it will involve the creation of (as ISEE was intended to be but has not become effectively) an *International Council For Environmental Education*.

My next point concerns an attempted contribution to Environmental Education *sensu latissimo*, in the form of the proposal and promotion of *Biosphere Day* as a device to remind, annually, all of humanity who are sufficiently educated to comprehend it, that what is really threatened is not so much the more solid Planet Earth as the fragile Biosphere — the sphere around the Earth in which life exists naturally — which is our home and life-support than which we have no other. Of the latest statement of Biosphere Day I have available copies for those of you who may be interested in a future for our world — with, on the reverse, a few chosen prior reactions ending up with that of the Secretary-General of UNCED. We now have many more, the latest being that of the Director-General of UNESCO, conveyed to me here at this first GEM event by his deputy, Professor Francesco di Castri. For the world-wide recognition and perpetuation of Biosphere Day, I am hoping to establish a fund and prizes for innovation and leadership.

Some concluding small points: as well as the photostats mentioned above, I have available reprints of my recent joint paper with Professor William B. Stapp, entitled 'Global Environmental Education: Towards a Way of Thinking and Acting.' I also have some stickers, sent recently from India, on the theme of 'Every Day A Biosphere Day', which please ask for if you would like to have — for as long as stocks last.

Despite lack of more than a modicum of funding, we are now pushing ahead — having completed editing the again fat book of proceedings, entitled *Surviving With The Biosphere*, of my fourth and positively last International Conference on Environmental Future — with the long-planned *World Who's Who in Environment & Conservation*, with plans to include a fair complement of environmental educators. This is a much-needed work and if anybody has any ideas of how we could cover our costs in preparing it I would be most grateful to hear them.

\*See footnote on preceding page. — Ed.

[Continued from page 195]

### *Peoples' Challenge, Peoples' Support*

The voices of the world's peoples, raised so clearly on these issues of environmental concern, at once challenge and provide opportunities of action for all governments and NGOs. In spite of what for many were disappointing official results of the United Nations Conference on Environment & Development (UNCED), held recently at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, awareness and concern have clearly intensified, and it is at long-last becoming recognized by more than a few far-sighted academics that our world — actually The Biosphere, as emphasized in the declaration of Biosphere Day — is becoming more and more gravely threatened.

Such polling survey results should actively stiffen our resolve to persevere in our efforts. We who work in environmental conservation can proceed with even greater confidence now that we have the world's peoples backing us. In labouring to preserve the Earth's biodiversity, in promoting sustainable living for the benefit of all the world's life, and in safeguarding The Biosphere as our own and all other forms of life's only natural home, we must never cease to strive for our ultimate goal of stopping, and eventually reversing, the still-increasing degradation of our planet's natural environment — due, basically, to human population-pressures and profligacy.

RICHARD WEBER, *Head  
Planning & Monitoring  
World Wide Fund For Nature  
WWF-International  
CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland.*

---

[Continued from page 200]

Finally I come to what for me is the most basic matter needing both education to comprehend, and communication to grasp, its vast and vital significance. Although several of our otherwise excellent speakers have touched on it, I have listened in vain for any serious attempt at tackling it, though Dr Batisse assures me that he will be doing so. The basic factor to which I refer is *human population*, and the basic problem is the absolute need to control its exorbitant increases and widespread profligacy. The only foreseeable alternative to effective world-wide family planning is appalling famine or other global and ghastly catastrophe such as collapse of The Biosphere.

NICHOLAS POLUNIN

---