

case of down-to-earth farmers, being sadly suspicious of any major innovation. Yet such will be needed—including new and better crops and practices—if the ever-increasing human population of the world is to be fed and accommodated at all adequately as a whole and equably in different regions. Consequently, control of this population should be our basic and long-term imperative, even as it lay behind our 'Reykjavik Imperative on the Environment and Future of Mankind' (Foundation for Environmental Conservation, 1977).

It is for such reasons and urgent purposes that education in general and environmental education in particular is so vastly important. Consequently, we were much interested to participate in the planning, with participants and sponsors of the Berne conference, of an 'International journal of environmental education' (whatever it may come to be called),* which should fulfil a vital need and be most warmly welcome. At present there is no international journal in this field, and so it is very much to be hoped that this one will prosper, as it surely should do in suitably dedicated hands. It is to be hoped and prayed that such a new journal will effectively inculcate, in a wide readership and their followers in everincreasing numbers, due appreciation of the need for, and developments in, environmental education for due protection of the Biosphere. At the same time it should inform educators and interested laymen on important environmental matters that are in need of dissemination which could range from local to holobiospherical.

Periodical International Conferences and Publications Henceforth?

For these and other reasons it is also to be hoped that the successors of the Berne conference on environmental education can be fully international in name as well as context, that they can be held in different continents or any-way countries at two- or three-yearly intervals henceforth, that their main papers and conclusions will be widely published (as has already been proposed in this instance), and that the next conference (for which an invitation has already been accepted to hold it in 1982 in a suitable country outside Europe), will focus effectively on the Biosphere. Indeed, if our proposal of an International Year of The Biosphere, or some practicable alternative (such as that suggested below), is activated as many are convinced it should be preferably in 1982 (cf. Vallentyne, 1980), this conference in the same year could well—with probable advantage all around—be an integral and major part of such observance and/or activity.

N. P.

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*We also proposed our own excellent publishers of this Journal as suitable for the new one, and are delighted to announce, with permission of the sponsors (our collaborators, WERC, see pp. 91–2), that this has now been arranged to start through Elsevier Sequoia in 1981.—N.P.

Battle for the Biosphere

This note deals with some 'qualifications' to the widely enthusiastic support (cf. Cloud, 1980 [This issue, p. 92]; Vallentyne, 1980 [this issue, pp. 97–9]) for our proposal (Vallentyne *et al.*, 1980) to increase scientific, public, and ultimately political, focus on the Biosphere through designation of 1982 as 'The International Year of The Biosphere'. The main qualifications are: (1) concern over the relative novelty and technical nature of, and consequent lack of popular familiarity with, the term 'Biosphere'; (2) doubts as to the effectiveness of 'Years' in achieving their real objectives; and (3) realistic questions concerning the adequacy of planning-time—at least without pre-arranged financing—in relation to 1982.

In answer to the first qualification, we see no way in which public awareness can be increased adequately with-

out reference to, and universal publicization of, the Biosphere as *our planetary life-support system*: the problem cannot be alleviated by running away from it but must be faced squarely and with resolve. Thus 'ecology' was used almost solely as a technical term until little more than a decade ago, and is of course a revered science of which the origins reach far back into antiquity and the name is more than a century old. Today it is in common and popular use as a word practically throughout the world and, for the general public, spells political and often militant (though generally well-meaning) action*. Much the same seems likely to happen to 'Biosphere' in the

*See, for instance, the Editorial 'Ecology and "Ecologists"' in our Spring issue of 1978 (*Environmental Conservation*, 5(1), p. 2, 1978).—Ed.

coming years—especially as, in the manner of ‘ecology’, it is nearly enough the same word in all the languages with which we are familiar. It does not have to be translated or transliterated to be understood by different cultures.

With regard to the second concern, we suggest that, to discard the focus on Biosphere because of a widespread dislike (and even we sense some degree of mistrust) of ‘Years’, would be akin to ‘throwing out the baby with the bath-water’. If there are other and possibly better ways to increase vigilance over our global life-support system, let us please hear of them; we are flexible in spirit and our minds remain wide open.

We regard the third concern as partially valid in the present-day context. Time until 1982 being now relatively short, our proposal, without we believe being seriously impetuous, was nevertheless unduly restrictive in not allowing a wider time-horizon that would permit some desirable-to-be-involved organizations to make the most of their potentialities to help. Many international associations meet only at intervals of from three to six years, and designation of a particular year would preclude their full participation. Other organizations, and particularly the United Nations, have become so ponderously bureaucratic that they require several years’ lead-time for decision and implementation. During such a period, circumstances may change radically in our tottering world and a particular theme already become hopelessly outdated.

Any widening of the time-horizon in order to maximize opportunity and flexibility must, moreover, not be allowed to obscure the urgency posed by the ever-increasing biospherical deterioration which is plain for every trained ecologist and, wider, environmentalist to see. Further delay in dealing with problems of Man’s making will only be to his own and Nature’s ever-increasing detriment. The overall struggle for enlightened and sustainable management of the Biosphere in the face of continually inexorable population-pressures must re-

main in focus and be implemented. The Biosphere is everybody’s business as well as home.

We accordingly urge the adoption of the suggestion by one of us, in revising the above Editorial after writing on 5th May to the newly-appointed Executive Officer of the seemingly most appropriate body, namely the World Environment and Resources Council (WERC, with copies to the President and Vice-President thereof, and to a few others), that WERC (cf. Laconte & Jones, 1980 [this issue, pp. 91–2]) take the lead in proclaiming and henceforth promoting in every possible way:

The World Decade of The Biosphere, 1982–92

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The World Environment and Resources Council (WERC)

WERC is a non-profit, nongovernmental organization (NGO) which was initially planned in 1972 at a meeting in The Hague of a group of concerned professionals. In 1973, at a meeting in Zurich, the organization was founded formally, its nature and structure were agreed upon, its statutes were drafted, and its aims and objectives were identified. An international organization registered in Switzerland, WERC holds consultative status with ECOSOC and UNESCO, and has worked closely with a number of governmental and nongovernmental international organizations.

The main objectives of WERC are to provide the world with a consultative NGO to work with the United Nations and its specialized agencies as well as with other multinational organizations committed to the protection of the environment and the conservation of the world’s resources. This cooperation is achieved by the provision of the professional expertise of scientists, lawyers, planners, educators, and engineers, to promote the use of environmentally-sound techniques for social development. These skills are directed also to improved use of both renewable and non-renewable resources.

The business of WERC is conducted by a volunteer group of internationally-oriented professionals who are elected by their national member organizations.

WERC furthers its aims through sponsoring (alone or jointly) environmental and allied conferences having wide appeal, and through broadening the scope of the subject-matters with which it deals—while always maintaining full scientific and professional integrity. This is widely accomplished through publication of the quarterly journal ‘*Habitat International*’, through organization as well as sponsorship of international conferences, and through publication of their proceedings.

Such conferences to date have included: ‘Conversion of Refuse to Energy’, held in Montreux, Switzerland, in 1975; the ‘International Congress of Scientists on the Human Environment’, held in Kyoto, Japan, in 1975; ‘Conference on the Environment of Human Settlements’, held in Brussels, Belgium, in 1976; ‘European Conference on Environmental Education’, held in London, England, in 1977; the ‘International Symposium on Science and Technology for Development’, held in Singapore, in 1979; and a further ‘International* Conference on Environmental Education’, held in Berne, Switzerland, early in 1980. All but the first of these events have

*Announced as the ‘Second European’ Conference on Environmental Education and reported on in the Conferences & Meetings section of our next issue.—Ed.