

FINDHORN FOUNDATION FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER

1st

September 2006

Dear Fellows,

Greetings! I write this time between journeys. I spent 3 weeks this summer in Mexico and USA and travel again in October. In July, Liza Hollingshead (Ecologia Youth Trust) and I were 'Findhorn Elder' representatives to a 'NextGEN' conference in an exquisite cloud forest in the Mexican mountains. The event consisted of energetic educated youth from Europe and the Americas inspired by the contribution of ecovillages to the quest for sustainability. It was held at a place called Las Canadas, a 13 year-old exploration into the parameters of what it means to be ecological - innovative architecture (reminiscent of the work of James Hubbell), minimal electricity, solar showers, compost toilets, bio-intensive gardens, permaculture, extensive eco-restoration, etc. Wonderful place to hold a working conference among youth eager to promote and support such places around the world. The work consisted of getting themselves organised as a group, and issuing a call for like-minded to join them at a larger event to be held next year, probably at the Tamera ecovillage in Portugal. Liza and I came away with the wonderful feeling that the future will be in good hands IF our generation don't blow it before their future gets here.

We then moved on to the USA to spend time with my aging parents. The further north we went, the hotter it got. I re-painted my family home in Kansas in 100 degree (F) heat. It was like a week-long sauna. And it seems triple digit temperatures pervaded the entire country for most of the summer, even extending to the perennially cool haven of San Francisco Bay where the recurring summer fog cycle was mysteriously interrupted for several weeks. At the peak of this heat wave, I finally managed to catch the Al Gore movie - 'An Inconvenient Truth' - that has been so vigorously trailed on the internet and which comes to Europe in the fall. Suffice to say that I concur it's a 'must see' movie. Though the content is familiar to those who follow the global warming debate, it is presented brilliantly. Both Liza and I were on the edge of our seats for the duration as it set forth the parameters of the issue, conspicuously including its denial by most of the USA (together with the Bush bunch) to date. It also humanises Gore as he chronicles his own odyssey with the issue whilst inevitably evoking the obvious question: If climate change manifestly IS the over-riding global issue of our time, and if it requires top level political commitment to deal with it appropriately, why is he eschewing his own candidacy in 2008? If we really do have less than 10 years to avert catastrophe

on this front, who else will make it the priority he himself calls for? Anyway, I've signed a 'Draft-Gore' petition on the alternet@democracyinaction.org website. You may wish to do likewise. It's certainly gratifying to see the issue receiving the kind of attention that the movie helps assure.

There are already signs that it has helped to catalyse significant 'greening' in the UK. Mainstream politicians are falling all over themselves trying to persuade voters they're serious about climate change. To my mind, the Liberal Democrats are winning this contest hands down, mainly because their current leader, Ming Campbell, has endorsed 'Contraction and Convergence', the only serious plan to actually do the business. But both Labour and the Tories are doing their best to compete, mainly because of demonstrable indications from the electorate that they want to see more definite action from government to deal with the issue. Even Tesco's, the dominant supermarket in Britain, (like Walmart in the USA) is doing away with plastic bags and excess packaging, stocking organic foods, etc. And a smallish demonstration last week at Drax, Britain's largest coal-fired power station, drew coverage by virtually all of the mass media here. Clearly, a sea change in public opinion and willingness to respond is afoot.

And while I'm on this case, I want to reiterate my personal conviction that the only real solution on offer to the challenges posed by global warming (namely ever increasing atmospheric concentrations of CO₂) is that advanced by Aubrey Meyer, namely 'Contraction & Convergence'. If you're not yet familiar with its programme, go to: www.gci.org.uk/briefings/ICE.pdf Happily, Aubrey will be re-visiting Findhorn this fall as a presenter at the launch of our CIFAL-UNITAR programme for public authorities.

What's all this got to do with Findhorn? David Spangler has addressed precisely this question in the current issue of Network News. Mattie Porte, our resourceful new editor, asked David to reflect on James Lovelock's recent pronouncements to the effect that we may well have already passed the proverbial 'tipping point' towards IRREVERSIBLE climate change. Long story short, David has reminded us of the example set by our founders, Peter, Eileen and Dorothy, who, when they lost their hotel jobs, were obliged by the universe to change their lifestyle, and proceeded to co-create first the gardens and then the community here. I urge you to check it out, and indeed respond, if you feel so moved, either to me directly or to Mattie (global@findhorn.org) who would especially welcome your comments.

Incidentally, the 40th anniversary issue of Resurgence magazine features a lead article by Jonathan Porritt who, like David, counsels against despair and argues there's still a window of opportunity to ward off ecological collapse. The whole issue really develops this point with a veritable galaxy of leading Greens informing us of constructive ways in which we can be part of the solution. And many of them will be gathering on 16 September in Oxford to compare notes and join Satish Kumar in celebrating the 40th B-Day of Resurgence itself. If you want to join them, write to: info@resurgence.org Though I'd love to be there, I'll have to content myself with extending warmest congratulations and best wishes to Satish et al on their abidingly stellar contributions to the Green movement.

Elsewhere on the home front, I reckon the biggest news is Foundation Management's recent decision to 're-think' plans for new guest facilities here. On the advice of professional fund-raisers, there were concerns that the project would not 'sell', especially with ever-escalating projected costs. Hence, the Foundation is devising alternative, more modest, plans to address the abiding needs for accommodating both guest and staff requirements. Stay tuned for details as they emerge. Happily, I gather it is also seeking ways to include my own plans for a new Youth Eco-Education Centre here.. And the recently re-named 'Ecologia Youth Trust' has offered to serve as the sponsor organisation for a lottery grant to which Liza and I are now applying the finishing touches in more active collaboration with the Foundation itself. All of which strikes me as 'progress'.

The NFA (New Findhorn Association) convened its monthly community meeting last night and it featured reports on the current 'state of play' in community development. Mari Hollander, (soon to step down as Focaliser of Management,, yielding to Bettina Jespersen), gave an overview of the Park Development Plan (which she's also likely to continue to superintend for the Foundation). Bill Henderson did likewise for Dunelands. He indicated that Gaia Architects (from Edinburgh) are currently preparing a provisional 'master plan' for Dunelands in light of overall plans for the Park, and will be inviting feedback from both young and old(er) community folk in mid-September. This project continues to gather momentum amidst ongoing discussions around appropriate density issues (i.e. how many people and buildings can the designated 11 acres reasonably accommodate?). Alex Walker, the community financial coordinator with more hats than even he can count, informed us of imminent plans to create a Community Development Company (CDC). Its primary purpose will be to oversee and facilitate the construction of affordable housing here by minimising dependence

on outside funding institutions. The CDC is being formed in the light of advice from Giles Chitty, former chair of Foundation Trustees, and his current colleague Peter Holden, and it includes Bill Henderson, resident Fellow Angus Marland, and recently returning member David Mead. This is a promising new initiative that is part and parcel of marshalling our collective resources for the community's next steps. Finally, resident Scottish 'bard', Margot Henderson, gave us an invigorating indication of what a newly formed study group on the work and counsel of Dorothy Maclean has been up to in recent months. This served not merely to resuscitate us on the night, but to remind us of our abiding legacy of co-creating with nature.

Finally, if you will forgive me ending (as well as beginning) on a personal note, I'm currently beginning preparations for a month-long, and distinctly daunting, trek to help complete a micro-hydro project at a remote Tibetan Buddhist monastery. It's being organised by the Nepal Trust, just one of 5 projects this remarkable group, headed by former community members Jim and Liz Donovan, is currently initiating in that troubled country. Hence, I'm finally taking myself in hand, and doing my damndest to get fit, not just to get up and down those Himalayan hills, but to film the process as well. Wish me luck!

In the Spirit of Fellowship,
Roger Doudna, Coordinator
Findhorn Foundation Community Fellowship