

VEGAN SELF-SUFFICIENCY NETWORK

Autumn NEWSLETTER



Welcome all! We hope your gardens and allotments have come through the extreme fluctuations of this summer's weather and still managed to produce a worthwhile harvest. Our own plot has suffered not only from the weather but also from lack of attention whilst our energies have been diverted elsewhere - we have had some poor results from certain crops, while others have thrived and given bumper pickings - it's all give and take, win some, lose some!

For the benefit of those who couldn't attend, the following piece reports on the recent VSSN Gathering.

Thankyou to those who have contributed to this Newsletter or helped us with 'backstage' work, and warm wishes to all for the autumn.

Love from

Clare + Alan

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V . S . S . N . M I D S U M M E R G A T H E R I N G

The first national gathering of VSSN members was held from 14th - 16th June at Canon Frome Court, near Ledbury, Herefordshire, and was attended by about 50 VSSNers from all over the UK and Eire.

Canon Frome Court is a large house, once a school, set in it's own 40-acre rural estate. Now home for a community, the location and facilities were fairly well suited for our Gathering, with plenty of outdoor camping space and large rooms indoors for our use.

The weather, which has been so unpredictable and unseasonable for much of 1985, was fortunately calm, sunny and warm - though the nights were perhaps a little chilly.

Most of the VSSN members booked for the Gathering arrived during Friday evening, which was spent informally in tent-pitching, introductions, chatting, and eagerly tucking in to the vegan buffet supper provided by the Canon Frome community.

As the last folks arrived on Saturday morning, the Gathering proper was kicked off with an enlightening talk by Chris Mattingley of the Canon Frome community, who gave freely of his valuable time to tell us in detail about the estate, particularly the crops, farming practices and degree of self-sufficiency achieved, and also the inner workings of the community itself. Chris then bravely tackled a barrage of questions - not an enviable task when speaking on behalf of an omnivorous, mixed farming community and outnumbered 50 to 1 by eager vegans!

After this, VSSNers had the opportunity to modify the proposed schedule of events for the weekend, though, as it turned out, most were happy with things as they were - fairly informal and with plenty of free time for exploring the estate and getting to know each other better.

Next, most of those present decided to adjourn to the lawn - partly to sit in the

sun, but mainly to discuss the options, ideas, philosophies and practicalities of vegan self-sufficient communities and their establishment. It was encouraging to see how many were keen to develop such lifestyles - there seemed to be plenty of plans developing and it will be good to see them coming to fruition over the next few years.

After a break for lunch, we reassembled for a discussion led by Robert Hart on agroforestry, horticulture and diet. Robert, who was with us only by much special effort to lend his support to the work of VSSN, spoke of his own experimental plot at his Shropshire home and also brought a selection of his excellent books for sale at especially reduced prices.

At the end of the afternoon, the Leda Theatre Collective entertained the children with a short play, "The Ghosts That Couldn't Say Boo!". Mick and Bev returned to the stage after the evening meal to set us reeling with the hilarious vegan comedy "A Fistful Of Lentils".

Sunday started with a short but inspiring film, "Pedal Power". This took a brief historical look at human-powered machinery, then demonstrated some modern applications that could be utilised on a small scale, such as grain mills and winches.

The rest of Sunday morning was devoted to a practical demonstration by Alan Raddon of rope-soled shoe making. Many of us took the opportunity to participate in this, trying (or rather tying!!) our hands at the various stages in the metamorphosis of a length of rope and a piece of cloth into a shoe. Meanwhile, Chris Mattingley once again gave of his valuable time to take the rest of our group on an informative guided tour of the community's orchards.

Sunday lunch was the last full meal actually prepared by the caterers from our host community, and was again of the high standard we had enjoyed throughout the weekend. Jane and Pam and their helpers had excelled themselves, preparing delicious hot vegetable dishes and savouries, scrumptious salads, home-made bread and sugarless desserts and snacks.

Once lunch was seen off, we settled down for our second film, "Living The Good Life", an insight into the lifestyle and philosophies of Helen and Scott Nearing. The remarkable Nearings were an example and inspiration to us all, working tirelessly on their New England homestead - house building and food growing, as well as sharing of their experience and wisdom with an endless stream of visitors - and all this when Helen was in her 70's and Scott in his 90's.

Retiring to the sunny lawn once again, a general discussion on gardening methods developed, covering various topics including veganic, vegan-organic and organic cultivation, compost toilets, feeding the world, the problems of animal farming, and so on.

Our final film was "Tara's Mulch Garden" which portrayed a year in a vegetable garden successfully cultivated using Ruth Stout's straw mulching system.

Sunday evening's meal was totally prepared by VSSN volunteers and was completely made up from ingredients that can be grown in the UK. The meal was eaten communally, the last occasion of the weekend when everyone was together in one place.

The weekend concluded informally on Sunday evening with farewells to those who had to leave, while those stopping over till Monday morning relaxed for leisurely conversation with old and new friends.

THANKS to everyone who came to the Gathering, especially -

Barry, Catherine, Cheryll, Daniel, David, Einir, Fiona, Ian, Julie, Lorraine, Mark, Rod, Sarah, Steve, and anyone else we might have missed in the rush - for helping with kitchen chores;

Dick, Gordon, Ken, Paul, William and others - for leading discussions;

Pete and Steph - for preparatory help;

Tony - for moral support and keeping things flowing.

EXTRA SPECIAL THANKS to Robert Hart and Alan Raddon; to Chris, Jane and Pam and the Canon Frome community; to Mick and Bev of the Leda Theatre Collective.

Thanks too to anyone we may have forgotten to mention (sorry!).

ALAN & ELAINE.

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PLEASE NOTE THAT IDEAS AND OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY VSSN MEMBERS AND CONTAINED IN THE NEWSLETTERS ARE PRESENTED AS INDIVIDUAL VIEWPOINTS ONLY AND MAY NOT NECESSARILY BE SHARED BY OTHER VSSN MEMBERS OR THE NEWSLETTER COMPILERS... THANKS!

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EXPERIMENTAL VEGAN FARM ?

Following a discussion between some Vegan Society members at the VSSN Midsummer Gathering, it has been proposed that the following motion be put to this year's Annual General Meeting of the Vegan Society:

"Recognising that the declared object of the Society includes promoting 'knowledge of, and interest in.... the vegan method of agriculture', this AGM requests Council to give urgent consideration to the establishment of an experimental farm to be run on principles in accordance with those of the Society. The Council should also establish a permanent sub-committee to monitor and publicise developments relevant to the vegan method method of agriculture."

One of the first tasks of the sub-committee would be to define exactly what constitutes 'the vegan method of agriculture'. Presumably this would exclude all animal husbandry and derived products, but would it permit the use of chemical fertilisers, inorganic/organic biocides, etc? Having done this, an experimental vegan farm would be established in order to demonstrate the feasibility (or otherwise!) of 'the vegan method of agriculture' on a commercial scale. The farm might also incorporate facilities for running courses on vegan agriculture and related subjects. VSSN members seeking to establish a vegan smallholding but lacking the means to do so would make ideal candidates for establishing and running the farm, assuming a willingness to work long hours for relatively low pay. (It is foreseen that the Vegan Society would subsidise the farm initially, paying a basic wage to the staff, but that, once established, the farm would be financially self-sustaining).

I believe that an experimental vegan farm would provide visible proof of the efficacy of an animal-free agriculture, furthering the aims of the Vegan Society and VSSN at the same time. What do other members feel? Please write to me with your comments, indicating whether you would be willing to speak in favour of the motion at the Vegan Society AGM (date and venue for this have yet to be fixed - see the Autumn 'Vegan' for details). In particular I need someone to second the motion before it can be submitted.

PAUL APPLEBY,
57, Sharland Close,
Grove,
Wantage,
Oxon OX12 OAF.

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(Editors' comment: We'd like to point out that the above proposal should not be considered as deriving from VSSN. VSSN has no internal policy-making structure, so such proposals are beyond the capabilities of its membership as a whole.

However, we would personally like to commend Paul on his initiative and urge readers who are also Vegan Society members to support his proposal.

Alan & Elaine.)

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' V E G A N V O L U N T E E R S '

R e p o r t s

Having enjoyed the Gathering and meeting fellow members of the Network - all wonderful people - I was very pleased that Paul Appleby could at such short notice be 'Host' to me for a vacant week.

The little work we did manage to get done between bad weather and a few days illness involved scything overgrown ground, forking and raking some ready for sowing, pruning hawthorn trees in a nearby wood for staking peas, thinning out seedlings, hoeing, etc.

I regret not getting more done for Paul, but that leaves scope for more Volunteering - it's a productive holiday, and a great way of gaining experience.

AIDAN GRIBBIN, Dublin.

Quick notes of thanks to Fiona Ashley and Julian Dean, and Graham Hooper for Volunteer visits recently. Torrential rain unfortunately prevented Fiona, Julian

and ourselves from doing the garden work we had planned, but we enjoyed their company for the weekend anyway. The weather was better for Graham's visit, and he helped us greatly with weeding, sowings of late crops, and duplicating the new VSSN Contact List. Thanks folks!

Elaine & Alan.

New list of 'Hosts'

A new 'Vegan Volunteers' Host List is enclosed with this Newsletter as we are pleased to have three new additions. The previously issued list (March '85) is now obsolete.

We wish everyone involved a successful Autumn's Volunteering and Hosting.

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LETTERS

Many thanks to all those who put an effort into preparing and organising the VSSN Midsummer Gathering, and also to the members of the Canon Frome community who helped and the guest speakers.

It was nice to see old friends and acquaintances, meet people with whom I had corresponded and never seen, and meet completely new people. Three members had come all the way from Ireland - talking to one of them, it struck me that parts of southern Ireland would be particularly good for setting up a vegan community - cheap land, friendly people, mild climate, little industry, smaller towns. It is also a very beautiful area - mountains, lakes, wonderful coastline. Anyone interested? If so, I have some information about a smallholding for sale near Cork - my address is on the Contact List.

ARIADNE MORAIS, London NW4.

Just a few words of thanks to everyone who helped put together the VSSN Gathering. We do appreciate the extra effort needed to make personal contacts and make it the enjoyable weekend it was.

DANIEL, FIONA, NAOMI & HOLLY BARBER, Penryn, Cornwall.

Here is a question... any thoughts please? This season I have tried runner beans under polythene. Fantastic growth, big plants, perfect foliage, lots of flowers. Only problem - just a handful of beans! I think lack of access for insects could be the reason. Has anyone tried beans under glass or polythene? It's worth trying for as it gives a much longer season.

The nursery where we live is stepping into the alternative tech field. They are planning on total wind power generation for roughly 8 acres of greenhouses. We live right on the coast of West Sussex and there is certainly plenty of wind. This windmill should stand 300ft to the top of its blades. It will be running a 150kW generator. Very pricey, but in comparison to oil it should pay for itself in 3 years.

The chap who is building the generator runs a business making a variety of wind generators. The small domestic model (about 4ft diameter blade) costs around £200. If anyone would like information on these, I will be pleased to forward any letters.

MIKE ARBIN,
Fordacre Nursery, Horsemere Green Lane,
Climping, Nr Littlehampton,
West Sussex, BN17 5QZ.

BADGES & STICKERS for recycling at low prices, can copy own artwork. Also Christmas and Vegan cards. SAE's please.

I now have a small trailer for my small van, so anyone who wants something moved please telephone Accrington 392058. I would welcome learning opportunities in vegan/ic gardening and tree culture, preferably long weekends.

Someone left a pen at the Gathering - anyone furnishing a fair description and a stamp can have it back.

ROD SINGLETON,
56, Paxton Street, Accrington,
Lancashire, BB5 1QQ.

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Movement for Compassionate Living

We are glad to be able to tell you of the launch of a new group, called 'The Movement for Compassionate Living'. It is expected to appeal especially to those who realise that life is reaching a critical stage and that its furtherance depends on a commitment to compassion for all living things - compassion worked out in action at every level of daily living.

In terms of daily living, compassion requires the use of plant products to the exclusion of all those derived from animals. Practically this is important because it is the most economical way of meeting the needs of a rapidly increasing world population from the diminishing resources of a finite planet. Spiritually it is important because the realisation that the cruel exploitation of animals is completely unnecessary releases faith, hope and power to work for a viable future.

The new movement will be organised in conformity with the principle that every group to which we belong should be a microcosm of the new world which we are working to create. It will function with the minimum of expenditure of resources compatible with efficient communication. There will be a quarterly magazine, meetings of various kinds, and a series of educational projects.

The first educational venture is concerned with the world food situation - 'FOOD FOR EVERYONE' is a set of ten information sheets for display purposes. The sheets are printed on A4 size recycled paper and they are recommended for display on World Food Day, 16th October, and during One World Week, 20th - 27th October. The pack is available for £1.00 including postage and packing.

Membership of the Movement will be open to all, and subscription will be £3.00 annually (cheques/P.O.'s payable to The Movement for Compassionate Living, please). The first issue of the magazine is planned for October. Enquiries (please enclose two postage stamps) and subscriptions should be addressed to:

9, MOYLE TERRACE,
HOBSON,
BURNOPFIELD,
Co. DURHAM,
NE16 6EQ.



The pack of display sheets
can be ordered from:

47, HIGHLANDS ROAD,
LEATHERHEAD,
SURREY,
KT22 8NQ.



Love and Peace from CATHERINE and DEAN YATES and KATHLEEN JANNAWAY.

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ALMOST A SYSTEM TO END ALL SYSTEMS

Companion Planting: Successful Gardening the Organic Way by Gertrud Franck (Thorsons, 1983).

Don't be put off by the title - this is not just another mini-encyclopaedia of largely unconfirmed traditional plant associations. It is an account of a beautifully simple, labour-saving, tightly integrated system of ecological cultivation, the result of 35 years of experience of a conscientious German hausfrau, determined to provide fresh greenfoods for a large family of humans and animals for most of the year.

I call it 'almost' a system to end all systems, so instead of criticising Frau Franck for her few shortcomings, I may as well say at once what I consider to be THE System to End all Systems! It is a combination of the Franck system with:

- 1: Another German system, Mound Cultivation, where only small areas are available;
- 2: The Joy Larkcom system of growing a wide variety of salad vegetables throughout the year (Frau Franck largely restricts herself to conventional vegetables and herbs and allows for a winter hiatus);
- 3: The Agroforestry/Permaculture system of growing fruit and nut trees and bushes among the vegetables.

With this comprehensive system, which I call FMLA (Franck-Mound-Larkcom-Agroforestry), it should be possible for a vegan family to attain a surprising degree of self-sufficiency in most of the essential foods throughout the year, using a comparatively small space - say a large town garden.

Gertrud Franck's ideas are of special interest to vegans as they require no animal manures or chemical fertilisers. One of the beauties of her system is that it is virtually self-fertilising: there is little or no need to import fertility from outside.

Practically every plant fulfils multiple roles:

- 1: As food for humans (and, in Frau Franck's case, animals);
- 2: As providing shelter and disease-and-pest-resistance for its neighbours;
- 3: As providing fertility for the whole garden, where its residues are left on the surface as a mulch, incorporated in the compost heap, hoed in as a green manure or converted into liquid manure or sprays by being allowed to ferment in a bucket of water.

Every plant and every part of every plant, including 'weeds', thus fulfils a vital function as contributing to the good of the whole, including the household that depends on it.

As regards the symbiotic function of plants in helping their neighbours, Frau Franck does not rely on hearsay alone but on her own scientific observations over many years. In particular she mentions several aromatic herbs and plants with rough surfaces that have proved effective in warding off slugs and snails.

Her system has all the advantages of the No-Digging System. As she only advocates working a few inches of topsoil, soil-structure is maintained and steadily improved over the years. Her main 'co-workers' in the soil are earthworms and other living organisms fed on plant-residues, as well as the roots of green manure crops, such as mustard, spinach and field-beans, which she leaves to rot in the ground. (If trees, bushes and other perennials are included in the system, their roots fulfil still more valuable functions in drawing up minerals and moisture from the subsoil.)

The Franck system is amazingly economical in labour. Its maintenance would not overtax either a busy or elderly person. It eschews all forms of machinery and demands only three tools: a Swiss hoe, a rake and a fork, used mainly for pricking over encrusted surfaces to aerate the soil.

As it also includes herbs, for both human and plant health, as well as flowers, the Franck system (or, better even still, the FMLA system) creates a beautiful environment that is attractive to wildlife. Therefore it not only makes for a high degree of self-sufficiency but also makes a valuable contribution to conservation.

ROBERT HART.

MOUND CULTIVATION FOR NEAR-MAGIC PRODUCTIVITY

(translated from German)

Do you want to enjoy the biggest possible harvests of the finest vegetables in the smallest space? Then go in for mound cultivation. This is the latest craze - though in fact it is only a refined development of our good old compost heap.

The Chinese, known as vegetable epicures, have been doing mound cultivation for centuries. One Chinese emigrant managed to arouse the enthusiasm of Americans for his 'magic mounds'. From there they came to us and year by year they find more devotees. And with good reason.

You dig a trench, 25cm deep, 140cm wide and as long as you wish. It is important that it should lie in a north-south direction, so that the mound will receive optimum solar radiation.

To make the core of the mound, the trench should be packed with coarse plant material, such as shredded fruit-tree prunings, hedge cuttings and dahlia and sunflower stalks. The core, 25cm high and 50-60cm wide, should be compact and yet allow a free flow of air.

Next comes, if available, a double layer of sods, with the grass side downwards.

If you cannot provide sods, use garden soil mixed with straw, dead leaves, twigs, etc. This layer should be about 15cm thick and should be rammed tight with good soil.

The third layer, 20cm thick, should be made of damp fallen leaves and other autumn plant refuse, not too coarse.

Then follows a 15cm layer of immature compost, mixed with peat.

The fifth and last layer, 20cm thick, comprises loose, fine garden soil, enriched with ripe compost.

It is best to build the mound in autumn, though early spring is also suitable. It is planted with various different vegetables, arranged in oval rows round the whole mound.

In the first year the mound can be topped with a row of tomatoes, with cauliflowers, spinach and radishes in lower rows.

The second year's plantings should include legumes, such as broad beans and peas, though not in adjacent rows, together with carrots, onions and lettuces.

In the third year other legumes could be planted, as well as celery and leeks.

In the fourth year, you can either combine beetroot with strawberries, which should only be left in for a further one or two years, or plant potatoes.

After five or, at the most, six years the mound's energy is exhausted.

WHY THE MOUND IS SO PRODUCTIVE

1: The organic material gradually rots down in the course of time. The consequent emissions of heat spread from within outwards. The increased warmth leads to stronger growth and earlier harvests.

2: The mound form increases the growing space, which is very important in the small gardens of today. It also ensures that the sun's rays fall vertically on the east side in the morning and on the west side in the afternoon. Thereby the mound warms up earlier and remains warm longer than beds on the flat.

3: Owing to the coarseness of the lower layers, the structure of the mound remains loose and oxygen circulates freely - ideal conditions for strong growth.

4: The plants have access to a large amount of organic material, which is constantly replenished by the gradual rotting process.

5: If you mulch the plants with grass cuttings, you are spared the trouble of hoeing. Mulching is also advisable to prevent the soil becoming waterlogged during heavy downpours.

Of course building a mound is more trouble than gardening on the flat. But this innovation pays for itself many times over in the course of five or six years. During that period you never have to dig the mound. And you will enjoy harvests both qualitatively and quantitatively superior to anything you would have dreamed possible. The only disadvantage is that mice enjoy burrowing into the loose soil.

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MAGAZINE REVIEW: "PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVES"

Some readers may be interested in this small magazine, produced by David Stephens whose reusable envelopes often turn up in 'eco' shops. It is intended to deal with wider aspects of conservation and is mainly concerned with energy/resource saving ideas or devices which can be used in the home or everyday life.

Some examples mentioned in the magazine so far include: more ecological ways of washing, reducing dampness and condensation in the home (a cause of increased heating bills among other problems), water saving, and even how to usefully deal with body waste without wasting it down the loo.

I found the magazine interesting and thought provoking, and it could well be useful for anyone interested in conserving Earth's precious resources. It costs £5.00 for 6 issues and can be ordered from P.A. Products, Tirmorgan, Pontyberem, Dyfed, Cymru. (Issue 4 is the most recent).

GRAHAM HOOPER, Oxford.

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"SOMETIMES WHEN THE WIND BLOWS I CAN FEEL IT BLOWING THROUGH US LIKE WE WERE A FIELD OF WHEAT. I CAN FEEL THE WIND IN EVERYBODY'S HAIR BESIDES MINE, AND I KNOW THAT WE'RE NOT REALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE WHEAT.

THE WIND BLOWS BY AND OUR SEASON PASSES, TOO, JUST LIKE THE WHEAT SEASON PASSES. WE'D BETTER DO IT WHILE WE'RE RIPE, BEFORE OUR SEASON PASSES." Stephen Gaskin. (7)

NUTTING IN AUTUMN

'GROWING VEGANS'
for Young
VSSN members



Beech
woods, parks, gardens.



Walnut
parks, gardens.



Sweet Chestnut
woods, parks.



Hazel
woods, hedges, gardens.

DON'T THROW STICKS OR STONES TO KNOCK DOWN NUTS - YOU'LL DAMAGE THE TREE AND MIGHT EVEN HURT YOURSELF. DON'T PICK UNRIPE NUTS OR BREAK BRANCHES. DO USE A LOOPED STICK TO GENTLY PULL BRANCHES DOWN TO WITHIN REACH. DO LEAVE SOME NUTS FOR THE BIRDS AND SQUIRRELS.

DO PUSH A FEW NUTS INTO THE SOIL AS YOU WALK THROUGH THE WOODS OR ALONG HEDGEROWS - THESE WILL GROW NEW NUT TREES FOR THE FUTURE. CAREFULLY CRACK NUTS WITH A STONE OR HAMMER. HAPPY NUTTING!

DON'T EAT THESE!

THEY'LL MAKE YOU SICK!



acorns
(oak)



conkers
(horse chestnut)

GROWING SUNFLOWER GREENS

1 USE SEEDS YOU'VE SAVED FROM THE SUNFLOWERS YOU'VE GROWN - OR YOU CAN BUY WHOLE SEEDS

2 WEIGH OUT 50 GRAMMES OF THE SEEDS

3 SOAK THEM IN A JAR OF WATER FOR 24 HOURS

4 DRAIN OFF THE WATER - THEN PUT THE JAR SOMEWHERE DARK FOR ANOTHER 24 HOURS

5 FILL A SEED TRAY WITH PEAT OR WEED-FREE SOIL 2.5 CM DEEP

6 COVER WITH THE SEEDS SET CLOSE TOGETHER AND PRESSED LIGHTLY DOWN

7 WATER THE TRAY - THEN COVER IT WITH A PIECE OF CARDBOARD

8 UNCOVER AFTER A FEW DAYS WHEN THE SEEDS HAVE SPROUTED

9 KEEP THE SOIL MOIST. WHEN THE SHOOTS ARE 7.5 CM HIGH PUT TRAY IN SUNNY PLACE

10 CUT THE SHOOTS OFF AT SOIL LEVEL AS YOU WANT TO USE THEM. THEY'RE TASTY IN SALADS AND SANDWICHES, OR JUST ON THEIR OWN!

AN INTENDED VEGAN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

In response to the article in the Summer Newsletter of VSSN by Kathleen Jannaway, we would like to take the opportunity to draw your attention to our intention to initiate a 'Vegan Horticultural Society' which will be situated in the West Midlands. The aims of the society shall be to promote and research various methods of horticulture which are compatible with vegan ethics. The society shall have its own land on which to demonstrate vegan horticultural techniques and serve as a centre for co-ordinating projects and experiments and provide information and guidelines for controlled experiments, and for collecting and publishing results.

In time it is also hoped that the society shall be able to offer seed which has been grown veganically for several successive generations. It has been demonstrated (Haighley experiment) that seed grown organically responds better to organic cultivation when the seed is of 3 - 5 years successive generations of organic cultivation. From this it is clear to see that an unbroken succession of generations of veganically cultivated seed will develop characteristics favourable for veganic cultivation.

The society will publish a magazine composed of articles related to vegan horticulture. The following topics shall be included, plus others, and contributions sent in:

Soil - structure, profile, organic matter, major/minor elements, drainage, etc. Soil micro-organisms. Botany, plant breeding and genetics. Plant, soil, environment, ecology. Vegan pest control. Small scale food and plant production. Large scale food and plant production. Labour intensive systems. Systems and machinery. And much more.

We would also like to take this opportunity to say that we also plan to publish a 'Psychology, Practical, Theoretical' magazine. Articles shall include:

Practical dream analysis. The unconscious, personal and collective. The role of the unconscious. The unconscious and creativity. Instinct and the unconscious. Archetypes. Mandala symbolism. Analytical psychology and education, and much more. Articles are welcomed.

At present we are living in Powys, Wales. These two projects will begin when we move, and hopefully things will be set to start by next season. We look forward to your support.

PATRICK & RACHEL TREADWELL

c/o GORFANC, CARNO, NEWTOWN, POWYS, WALES.

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FOOD OR BUSINESS FOR PROFIT ?

The vegan way of life could be viewed to be the conclusion and part solution to some of the many conflicts and injustices with which our planet struggles. Veganic horticulture is one aspect of vegan culture in a wider sense. The solutions which it offers are of value to many people who are not vegan. Many of the principles and practices of veganic horticulture are practicable and worthy of the attention of those who are not vegan, and these practices should be encouraged and the advantages made known.

To understand what veganic horticulture has to offer, and to see how it is more efficient and beneficial than our present system of agro-business, it is helpful to examine the present system and how it differs from veganic horticulture in two main respects. These are the use of animals and their products and the use of chemicals in the agro-business. In order that a farm animal produces protein in the form of meat, milk, cheese or eggs, it must be fed many times the amount of protein yielded as meat, milk, etc. in the form of plant protein. The plants on which these animals are fed are raised and cultivated to a very large extent with the use of chemicals. This means that large areas of land are used in the production of small yields of protein, relative to the alternative means of producing protein. Animal farming is extremely inefficient, requiring huge inputs and resulting in the suffering of many animals and, frequently, unhealthy people.

Veganic horticulture offers various alternatives to the use of the by products and waste products of the animal farming industry. These by products have become associated with plant food production, but in fact this association is largely

due to the existence of huge quantities of by products and waste products of the animal farming industry.

In nature, animal remains and excretions play their part in the cycles of life and decay. In the animal farming industry the numbers and densities of animals are huge and artificial. Most countries which rely on animal farming are supporting very large populations of farm animals. This is very inefficient, intemperate and squanderous. Quality food production does not need, and in fact is better off without, the by products of animal farming.

The production of huge quantities of chemical fertilisers has grown very rapidly since the war when, no longer being required to produce arms and explosives, the chemical industry turned its attention to agriculture. At the beginning of this process things appeared to go relatively well. When chemicals are applied to crops in the form of fertilisers, the plants gradually adapt to taking up nutrients in this form and yields rise. Whilst this is happening the plants are also using up more of the soil's humus supply. Whilst these chemicals have been applied and increased yields have been obtained, less and less organic matter has been returned to the soil when in fact more is required. This has led to the depletion of the level of humus in our productive land, and much land is quite literally starving. Of the chemicals applied to crops for nutrition, only about 5% is actually utilised by the plants. These chemicals are natural resources that cannot and must not be squandered in this intemperate fashion.

The practice of animal farming and the use of chemicals are two aspects of the agro-business whose main interest is to expand, produce and sell more. For this it needs an ever increasing market, which it has found in the Third World. Farmers in the Third World have been encouraged to borrow money in order that they can buy and use chemicals and other goods the industry needs to sell. This has led to larger farms which means that fewer people are able to support themselves, and those who still are in the business of farming are more and more dependent on the agro-business which primarily, viewed as one giant industry, is not concerned with people or food but profit.

Changing to a method of food production that is not based on animal farming or the chemical industry is a change to a more efficient system, concerned with producing quality food, and is of consequence to starving people many miles away.

PATRICK & RACHEL TREADWELL, Powys.

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V I T A M I N B 1 2

The whole question of vitamin B12 in the diet and its presence in plant foods are still points for argument. The fact that B12 was only isolated in 1948 means that research into the subject is still somewhat limited.

The likelihood of B12 deficiency in vegans is still not fully understood:

"Medical and nutritionists opinions are far from unanimous and there are some puzzling contradictions. The matter has not been simplified by the realisation that B12 deficiency is even more prevalent among meat-eaters than vegans." [1]

The presence of B12 in plant foods is still debatable. Some sources claim the vitamin is to be found in plants such as comfrey or seaweed - others disagree. Vitamin B12 is only produced by micro-organisms, and some experts explain that it may be present in certain plants because they have been contaminated in some way:

"Some people claim that certain plants contain small traces, but its presence has only been verified in seaweed growing near sewage." [2]

"Although the richest dietary sources of vitamin B12 are foods of animal origin, some plant foods do contain the vitamin as a result of contamination with micro-organisms that produce the vitamin. It has been estimated from the analyses of samples of unsupplemented vegan diets that they could provide about 0.5 micrograms of the vitamin daily. The recommended intake for vitamin B12 is in the order of 3 - 4 micrograms of the vitamin daily. However, the requirement for the vitamin is in the order of 1 microgram daily, possibly less." [3]

Viktoras Kulvinskas, in his book "Survival into the 21st Century", makes several interesting points about B12 which are worth bearing in mind:

- 1: A high protein diet can increase B12 requirements.
- 2: B12 is heat sensitive - up to 85% can be destroyed by normal cooking.
- 3: Chlorophyll is believed to discourage destructive intestinal bacteria and encourage the beneficial microbial flora which produce B12.

So it seems a good idea to include plenty of raw food in the diet, especially items such as leafy greens and fresh bean sprouts, and perhaps to decrease the amount of protein consumed.

There are plenty of foods available commercially which are supplemented by B12. It seems that for those of us who are interested in producing our own sources of B12 we should turn to items which include fermentation in their processing:

"Beer and cider contain significant amounts of the vitamin." [3]

Dr J. Hannay of the Botany Department, Imperial College, London has found that "cabbages grown in water cultures to which B12 has been added meet more than the daily requirement. Parallel with these investigations, Pfau and Kallistrates (1961) have shown that B12 can be taken up by broad bean roots from water and sand culture. The next step is to find whether cabbages and other vegetables can pick up sufficient B12 from compost. This is where the earthworms come into the picture. Vitamin B12 does not usually occur in plant residues but earthworms casts are rich in it. It is probably produced by the action of certain bacteria in the earthworms' intestines.

Animal excreta from both herbivores and carnivores contain high concentrations of vitamin B12. This is mixed with larger amounts of B12 analogues which do not possess the characteristic physiological activity for mammals of the true vitamin B12.

A few soil micro-organisms and invertebrates also produce certain amounts of B12 intermingled with their analogues. However, by far the largest amounts and highest concentrations of B12 occur in earthworms."

These findings "provide evidence that, at least under certain conditions, vitamin B12 can be taken up by plants. Why then is there so much difficulty in finding any significant amount of the vitamin in staple plant foods? Work on compost and earthworms may provide an answer. Careful research is needed in this matter which is closely bound up with the role of plant foods in the solution of the world food problem." [4]

We feel that this implies that our vegetables may contain traces of B12 if they have been grown using compost in which earthworms have been active and/or in which vegan excreta has been carefully and safely composted. Hopefully future scientific research might prove this to be so.

References:

- [1] "FOOD FOR A FUTURE" - Jon Wynne-Tyson (Abacus, 1979).
- [2] "VITAMIN B12" - Frey Ellis & John Ellis (The 'Vegan', Spring 1972).
- [3] "VEGANISM: SCIENTIFIC ASPECTS" - T.Sanders (The Vegan Society, 1983).
- [4] "COMPOST, EARTHWORMS & B12" - a paper by F.Wokes et al, 1972.

Thankyou to Kathy Topple and Ariadne Morais for information and ideas for this piece, which is in response to the question posed by Rowena Lightfoot in the Spring '85 VSSN Newsletter.

(Elaine)

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E FOR ADDITIVES OR P FOR PROFITS?

Since I compiled the article on additives (distributed with the Summer '85 VSSN Newsletter) I have heard of various rumbles about scaremongering and the possible inaccuracy of the information. Even the TV programme hosted by Esther Rantzen has been stirred in its conscience for the nations health to warn that the French source of information disclaims any responsibility for the leaflet distributed by ecological groups. In addition, Maurice Hanssen, the author of "E for Additives" (a book of that title - not the leaflet), has disclaimed the information - partly reproduced in my article - and is encouraging others to do the same, as have, apparently, the British, Belgian and French governments. The information from Villejuif Hospital is said to have been written on stolen hospital paper!

Confusion about the E numbers has been generated. I compiled the list in good faith and believe the sources to be reliable. To perhaps give assistance to those who, justifiably, worry about food additives, wouldn't it be wise to question any food additive? In the main they are added to ensure 'consumer loyalty'. To question every additive is a healthy outlook. I offer readers to beware also of the term 'natural' when referred to food or additives. For instance, criticism of

fear of the possible carcinogenic properties of citric acid; digitalis for one is 'natural' - and can be lethal! I don't believe that all citric acid is derived from citrus fruits - perhaps the warning of being a carcinogen is based on its synthetic twin, artificially produced to cater for mass production. P for Profit again triumphs over H for Health!

TONY CREEK, Dyfed.

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WHAT DO WE REALLY DO
ABOUT FARM ANIMALS?

More and more people, and a lot of vegans included, are seriously considering a self-sufficient or self-reliant lifestyle, and many are searching for the means to achieve at least a start - a house and some land. Dreamers are

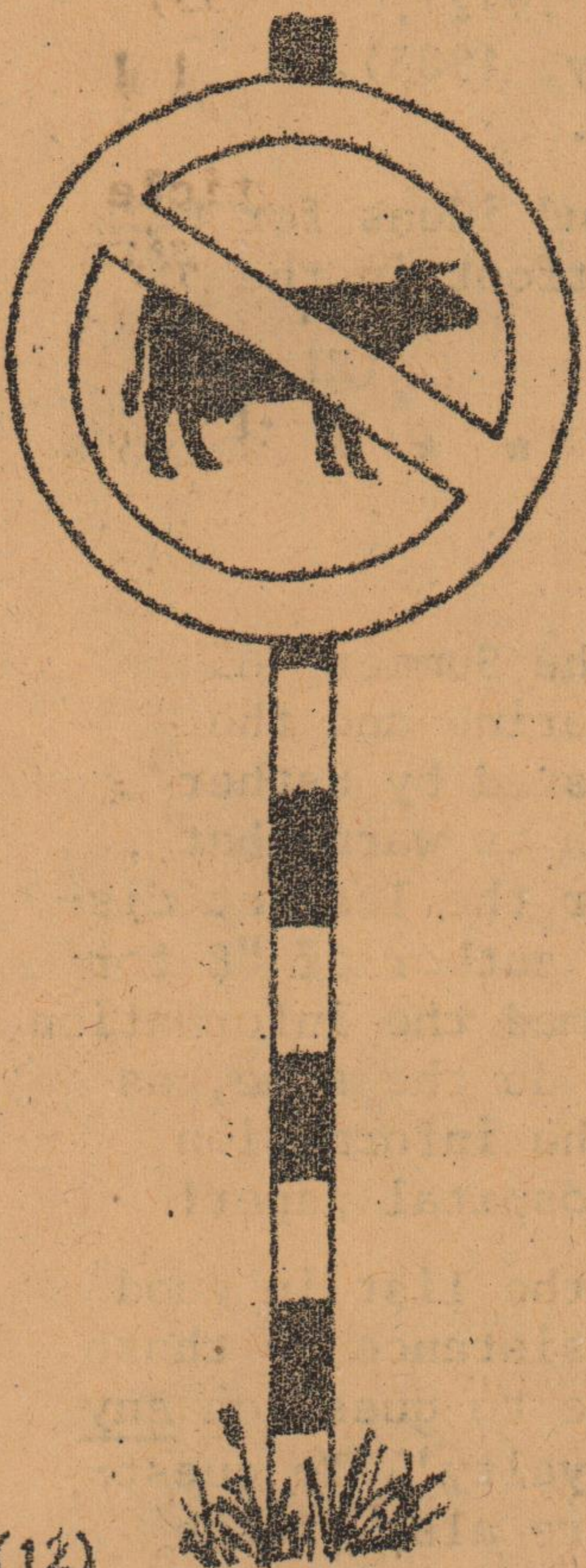
perhaps nudged by mass unemployment and the effects of one of the most oppressive governments in British history, plus the desire for a more simple, close to the Earth lifestyle with the rewarding benefits of 'growing your own' and creating, as much as possible, our own environment, rejecting the 'high tech' philosophy and dependence upon 'the System'.

Properties with land are still available and within financial reach for many of us, through savings or sale of town properties, supplemented perhaps by redundancy money and mortgages (it is possible to obtain a mortgage even when you're unemployed!). The 'recession' and its consequent limits on spending and EEC directives have shaken 'traditional' farmers to lose confidence that they can make a living, so land is coming on the market, some of it cheaply.

Will the current trends favour well for vegans? Vegetarianism is gaining popularity, as is the fashion for health foods. Are we witnessing the beginning of the end of meat eating? There are several promising indicators that this could be the case. Although we are a long way from national or global veganism, we have a lot to do. Living a vegan life is an example to others. Getting our own place, either as individuals, family groups, or collectively with other vegans, is a desire gaining pace - it is being achieved. How fast will this pace be? We are only steps away from vegans not just buying 'house with large garden' or even a smallholding - the desire is so strong to live the vegan life to the full that vegans are actively planning to live collectively with others of the chosen lifestyle and are poised (if not already achieved!) to purchase traditional farms 'lock, stock and barrel'!

So, consider for a moment: you have bought or leased your farm - what would you do, as a vegan, if this also meant you have the responsibility for the farm animals. Would you reject such a proposal - the responsibility? If you did, a 'traditional' farmer or smallholder would then continue the livestock trade. What are vegans to do with the animals - no cosy chats about the vegan philosophy now: what would you do?

No vegan could sell the animals, no more than kill them. Our 'civilisation' has introduced farm animals, hybridised them, removed or eliminated their natural predators, and eliminated or at least controlled many of the diseases that beset them. You cannot set them loose - these days all land belongs to someone. Vegans will be perhaps the only grouping who will act on their philosophy, and this means the full acceptance of the responsibility and recognition that we must bestow on animals the full and equal human rights of a full, free and wholesome life. To our knowledge the Americans did not slaughter imported black slaves when slavery was abolished. Hardly a model perhaps, because black people are still struggling - but no-one would publicly advocate breeding controls or special reservations for black people. Advocates of human rights, equal rights, campaign for the best of housing, education, nutrition and health for all. For vegans at least this would mean no distinction between species. (Fair comment here would be 'What about South Africa then?' - very true, what chance do animals have when humans are treated like battery hens! This point does not detract from my argument, it reinforces it!!). Profits are wrung out of humans



and animals alike.

We do not pretend to have all the answers here, but thinking vegans will respond to the argument because one of us will face this problem, soon perhaps, and we should at least give the question the benefit of our collective thoughts in support. Conscience will dictate in the end, but options and opinions would aid vegans faced with the prospect - the responsibility of animals.

It would not be enough to set aside a green hill for animals to end their days - they would continue to breed, although their numbers would reduce as intensive breeding techniques would cease. But, when disease or injury strikes, do we just let them fend for themselves on the basis that this is more 'natural' for them? Do we withhold remedies and skills that undoubtedly exist and have a measure of success in alienating their plight? Do we adopt a programme of killing the diseased and aged to prevent the possibility of weak animals breeding and therefore increasing the problems of disease and inherent disability? 'Civilisation' and its quest for leaner meat and higher production has created hybridised 'monsters' far removed from their natural state, bred for captivity and total dependence on humankind - a lot of suffering would follow the philosophy of 'Let them fend for themselves'. Dairy cattle for one would need the daily cycle of being milked, for a few months at least. Failure to carry out this function for them would result in a lot of pain, if not eventual tortuous death. Many farm animals will need winter quarters, food in the lean months (which will mean growing food for them) - although less intensive farming would mean less demand on food.

The perfect solution may never be found, as no-one yet has discovered an acceptable improvement on the natural order of things - vegans, understandably, do not look.

Perhaps this is the place to end (for now) the introduction to an argument that many will want a solution to settle for peace of mind. Being self-sufficient in practical tasks will include tackling such problems. It is not enough for us to be self-sufficient in theories.

Is there any reader who has had to come face to face with this problem? If so, we believe that we could all benefit from that experience, even if a compromise was reached.

Do we have a flaw in our philosophy of the kind the vegetarians have who find themselves with calves or male goats from milking - or is it simply that we have not lived out to the full our philosophy, testing our compassion, ecology, economy and health?

VICKI & TONY CREEK, Dyfed (June '85)

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I would like to take this opportunity to comment on Vicki and Tony's article - not to endeavour to supply answers to the many points raised by them, but simply to add a few personal reactions and show further aspects of their questions. Perhaps this might help readers in determining their own responses too.

Firstly, the article implies that all vegans are 'animal rightists' - though, knowing Vicki and Tony, I am sure that they are not mistaken in this way. All true animal rightists are vegan, but the reverse doesn't necessarily apply. The implication that the vegan philosophy means the instant and total acceptance of the rights of all animals to a "full, free and wholesome life" is, in my opinion, an overstatement and a precedent that is unworkable in practice. It would imply that there can never be any restraint imposed on an animal by a human - a major debate could be developed on this point alone, but hopefully your imaginations are capable of following through the illogicality and impracticality of this position.

My own understanding of the vegan philosophy is that we are striving to heal this damaged world as a whole and to develop a viable and compassionate lifestyle for humans that does not exploit other beings for our own ends.

There are no short cuts to a vegan Utopia. Changes will not come overnight - we must assume a long and difficult struggle in which short term compromises may be essential for the realisation of long term ideals. One major aspect of this is, I believe, the necessity for the cessation of the breeding of those "hybridised monsters", the artificially produced and maintained population of unnatural 'food' animals. I see no way that we can evolve ecologically yet still retain the millions of 'domesticated' animals with which we have burdened the (13)

planet and ourselves. Of course, I am not advocating euthanasia or the brutality of castration, but sexual segregation to prevent breeding would, over a relatively short term (the natural lifespan of each relevant species) solve what would otherwise become a very long term problem requiring perhaps more drastic measures to resolve - if the challenge is ever faced at all.

Humans have created the problems and we must work to solve them, but not by neglecting our responsibilities to the planet as a whole. All of creation is interwoven - the air and water, soil, plants, trees, insects and animals (including humans). To give exceptional treatment to any one aspect - and an 'unnatural' one at that - may be to the detriment of the whole, and we should not be so blinkered.

To finish with just one practical problem that vegans purchasing farms should consider - it is very unlikely that any ex-stock-farm 'animal sanctuary' could even hope to be self-sufficient in fodder. 'Imports' of feedstuffs from outside the farm would be required, thereby presenting the vegan with several dilemmas: (1) How to pay for such 'imports' (and veterinary bills, etc.) when the animal herds are no longer (thankfully!) producing income from meat, milk, wool, offspring or whatever. (2) Though imported feeds might be organically grown (if you're lucky!), they will more likely be chemically grown - so not only will you be supporting ecological damage elsewhere, you will be importing chemical residues onto your 'own' land. (3) Maintaining an unbalanced, i.e. non-self-sufficient, unit is merely a continuance of contribution to the social and moral injustices of the present world food situation.

There are no doubt further points which could be raised, but time, space and a 'boggled mind' mean they must be saved for future debate!

Before you all start writing in, please realise that I don't expect my hasty philosophising to be flawless, but I do believe that I am on the right track. I've pegged myself out over Vicki and Tony's ant's nest of an argument now - no doubt I'll get quite a few bites!!!

(Alan)

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LETTERS, CONTRIBUTIONS, ADVERTS, NEWS, REPORTS, ETC. ARE ALWAYS WELCOME FOR INCLUSION IN THE NEWSLETTER - BUT PLEASE INDICATE ON YOUR CORRESPONDENCE WHETHER OR NOT IT IS INTENDED FOR PUBLICATION, AND WRITE AS CLEARLY AS POSSIBLE. THIS WILL HELP US GREATLY - THANKS!!

COPY DATE FOR 'WINTER' NEWSLETTER IS 21st OCTOBER. Small items acceptable up to first week of November. Newsletter due out first week of December.

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ACCOMMODATION (rented) WANTED IN SOUTH WALES. Access to a garden ideal but not essential. Can anyone help? GRAHAM HOOPER, 16 Glanville Road, Oxford OX4 2DD.

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