

# Committees & Departments

## BASED-UK

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### BASED-UK at Sidcot summer school

Hassan Sabri, who had the honour of heading the Office of Social and Economic Development (OSED) in Haifa for thirteen years, set the tone for the BASED-UK programme at the summer school, emphasising that social and economic development was nothing but service to the world. In his wide-ranging and inspirational address to the summer school as a whole, he referred to the recent letters of the House of Justice which emphasise the need for Bahá'í communities to be engaged in "acts of humanitarian service".

There were eight sessions run by BASED-UK as follows -

#### What is Bahá'í Social and Economic Development?

Participants joined Sarah and Michael Richards from Witney in discussing twenty questions on Social and Economic Development (SED) in small groups in a workshop format. The questions included -

Why should we try to promote material development if we are trying to be detached from material things? Where do Bahá'ís get their ideas about development from? Why are Bahá'ís becoming more involved in development now? Should we consider SED as a teaching activity?

Quotations from the Writings and from the letters of the Universal House of Justice were provided that shed light on each of the questions. The workshop got everyone conversing about the true meaning of Bahá'í SED and was illuminating.

#### Being a Bahá'í at the supermarket

This intriguingly titled workshop, led by Sarah and Michael Richards, was designed to stimulate thought about our eating habits and food shopping preferences, relating these to issues of personal health, animal welfare, and the environment. It encouraged reflection on -

- Kindness to animals
- Striving to put our ideals into action
- Respect for and wise use of the earth, which is the source of all our riches
- Organic foods
- The importance of agriculture

The discussion included the efficacy and merits of consuming foods flown in from abroad at a cost to the environment (requiring the use of aircraft fuel). Such food is under-priced since it does not take its "pollution-cost" into account. The employment and trade implications of food consumption patterns were also discussed. All in all, it was a thoughtprovoking session.

#### Local Social and Economic Development

"Sheer inspiration!" "very useful", "we want to do this in our community" were comments made by some of the participants at the end of this animated session. Adam and Lindsey Thorne described the modest beginnings of local social and economic development (SED) activities of the Wychavon Bahá'í community eight or nine years

ago, which was deciding to bake cakes for coffee mornings to financially support a local homeless persons' charity called HAVEN.

From this, efforts expanded rapidly. Many new contacts were made with local activists, organisations, the church, and the local council. Often at the invitation of these institutions, the Bahá'í community began, over time, to support other local service initiatives such as the Peace Group, Women's group, LETS group, Credit Union, One World Week, Amnesty International, the Racial Equality Council, the Council's Millennium plans, etc. In some cases, the involvement was small, for example, money collected at a Bahá'í play about Martha Root was donated to the local branch of a Breast Cancer charity.

Several aspects of the Wychavon "model" appealed to participants at the session. The fact that the Bahá'ís did not themselves devise new SED projects, but rather supported existing humanitarian ones; the fact that not all members of the Bahá'í community were involved in everything but those that were kept the community informed and had its encouragement; the fact that children were made part of the SED work, e.g. sticking stamps on invitations, car-park duty at events. The Birthday of Bahá'u'lláh celebrations of the Wychavon community are large events attended by lots of non-Bahá'ís who have become friends due to this service-oriented involvement with the wider community. The town clerk sent a complaint one year saying he hadn't received an invitation to this annual Bahá'í event!

Overall, this was a presentation which gave a vision of the possibilities for other Bahá'í communities and excited much enthusiasm.

## **An Update on BASED-UK**

Geeta Kingdon gave an introduction to the work of BASED-UK. Participants learned how it was set up as a registered UK charity in 1993, in response to a request from the Office of Social and Economic Development (OSED) in Haifa. In 1997, BASED-UK obtained its first major grant (about a quarter of a million pounds over five years) from DFID - the UK government's Department for International Development - for a Bahá'í-inspired project in Honduras. Part of the work of BASED involves monitoring visits for evaluation purposes, regular communication with project workers and DFID, and writing reports for DFID. BASED is also supporting a Bahá'í-run orphanage in Honduras which has 120 girls.

The other part of BASED-UK's work consists of efforts within the UK to promote education about the meaning of Bahá'í Social and Economic Development and encouraging local Bahá'í communities to initiate/support local projects as "acts of humanitarian service". Participants learned that, in this respect, BASED's efforts in the past year have been -

3 newsletters sent to "Friends of BASED"

Articles in most issues of Bahá'í Journal UK

Production of a high quality exhibition on the distinctive aspects of the Bahá'í approach to development

BASED stall at major UK Bahá'í conferences and summer schools, designed to promote SED awareness

BASED presence at the Olympia Global Fair Exhibition and at a DFID Development Policy Forum

Well attended regional SED workshop

Major international conference on SED in August 1999

Creation of a website

Several participants in the session (and during the summer school) requested to become "Friends of BASED", donate to BASED by covenant, sponsor a child at the Tierra Santa Orphanage, borrow the BASED exhibition for their community, and/or receive the BASED-UK's SED information pack for local Bahá'í communities.

## **Local Social and Economic Development (Isle of Wight)**

Starting with the injunction in the Kitab-i-Aqdas to "Promote (ye) the development of the cities of God and His countries", this session from Barney Leith consisted of a talk in the first half and a workshop in the second. Barney called attention to the fact that the House of Justice has been placing increasing emphasis on the need for us to be engaged in acts of service - "the holding of regular meetings for worship open to all and the involvement of Bahá'í communities in projects of humanitarian service...(is) a further step in the implementation of the Law of God" (letter dated 28th December 1999 to the Bahá'ís of the World).

The particular strengths of the Bahá'í community were called to mind. For example it was noted that, whilst development practitioners advocate participatory development, in most cases the mechanisms do not exist at the local level to allow wide participation of the people in their own development; the Bahá'í communities in villages and towns, however, have the necessary social and administrative structures (Nineteen Day Feasts and Local Spiritual Assemblies) that permit consultation to occur and participation to take place.

The workshop entailed devising a Social and Economic Development project for our local area. One insight that emerged was that, instead of first analysing the needs of the area and then considering how one or more of those social or economic needs might be met by the efforts of the local Bahá'í community, it may be far better first to examine the strengths, talents, and interests of the local Bahá'ís and then decide which of the (many) needs of the area could be well-served by a Bahá'í project. It was also recognised that Bahá'ís needn't initiate new projects in order to take part in their locality - they could support existing projects run by other local groups. The consultation in four groups was very fruitful and worthwhile.

## **British Association of Bahá'í Esperantists**

British Association of Bahá'í Esperantists: Secretary, Irene Bennett, "Rossignol" Glaitness Road, St Ola, Kirkwall, Orkney KW15 1TW Tel: 01856 875033

## **Esperanto World Congress 2000 in Israel**

The Esperanto World Congress, an annual summer event which brings together speakers of the international language from all quarters of the globe, was hosted this year by the Israeli Esperanto Association. As it was held in Tel Aviv, it was an especially memorable and rewarding event for those members of BEL (Bahá'í Esperanto League) who were this year's representatives of the Faith, as BEL made arrangements for them to have the bounty of a three-day visit to Haifa during their stay.

### **Theme "Language and the Culture of Peace"**

The central theme of the Congress "Language and the Culture of Peace" - together with its venue in the Holy Land, offered unique opportunities for collaboration between the Esperanto Movement and the Bahá'í Faith. Linking the Bahá'í World Centre and the Esperanto Congress was member of the International Teaching Centre, Mr Hartmut Grossmann, whose name figured in the list of Honorary Members of the Congress Committee along with those of Israeli Government ministers and professors or other officials in various fields of culture.

### **International Bahá'í Community praised**

Mr Grossmann was one of the speakers during the opening ceremony and a delight it was to find that he had taken the trouble to be able to do this in Esperanto. Our hearts were uplifted still further when Justice Kep Enderby from Australia, the current President of the Universal Esperanto Association in his turn gave praise to the work and services of the International Bahá'í Community in fields of mutual endeavour.

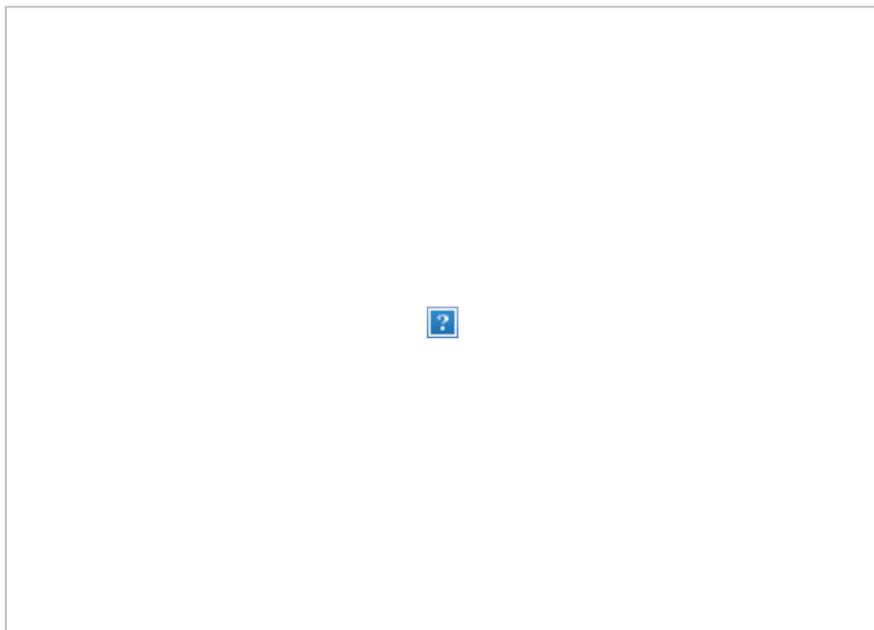
There was an additional interaction at the highest level when the President and Vice-president of the Universal Esperanto Association were received by Mr Ian Semple, representing the Universal House of Justice, during a visit to the World Centre. Interaction also involved five bus-loads of Esperantists who had chosen a guided tour of the Bahá'í World Centre as their optional excursion. The tourist booklet of Haifa, expounding the beauty of the Shrine of the Báb, the Terraces and Arc buildings on Mount Carmel, was freely offered to each visitor from the Congress, (with full text in Esperanto inserted) and also to enquirers who came to our Bahá'í table in the conference hall.

### **Esperanto classes to start at the World Centre**

While on our three-day pilgrimage, we had the privilege and pleasure of being invited to a session in the Pilgrim House with Mr Grossmann to discuss the value of our association with the Esperanto language and its world community and culture, ask questions and to make observations. This was an encouraging and heart-warming occasion, especially pleasing at the moment when Mr Grossmann announced that as from October this year a

class in Esperanto was to be started at the World Centre.

The Internet offers a vast amount of information on all aspects of Esperanto, helpful courses for learning the language, and of course the opportunity for as much practice with speakers from foreign lands as one might wish to obtain. However, unfortunately the secretary of BABE is still only contactable by telephone or post, (contact details above).



**Mount Carmel Projects:** A bird's eye view of the Terraces below the Shrine of the Báb taken on 29th June. It can be seen that the very formal gardens along the central axis of the Terraces are bordered by flowering trees and perennial bushes, then a wildlife corridor.

## National Conference 2000 - Appeal for volunteers

Volunteers are required at the National Conference, Scarborough, 10-12 November. If you are willing to offer two or three hours of your time over the weekend, to guide and assist those who are attending, please contact Parvin or Malcolm Lee, Tel: 01234 350829.

This is an extremely valuable service, vital for the smooth running of the conference and for the security and comfort of participants. All offers of help will be gratefully accepted.

## Children's Bahá'í Education Service

Children's Bahá'í Education Service, Contact: Mitali Peckham (Secretary) Tel: 01223 573873 Other Committee Members: Shiva Shirinzadeh-Finch (Chair)

Karen O'Donoghue (Treasurer) Clare Whitehead and Homa Saadat

A well-established community school has consulted with the CBES about formal assessment criteria. Obviously if we do not measure exactly where we are now we cannot know how much improvement we make. Clearly setting out our goals for education and then monitoring our progress is the best way to ensure that our efforts are goal directed and fulfil the need.

### Opportunities for training and improving teaching skills

During both weeks at Sidcot Summer school a teacher training programme was run (many thanks to Maggie Manvell, Midge Ault and Becky Maude) which proved very successful and positive. The CBES has organised a

series of "taster days" based on this programme and is working to ensure that the full course is made as widely available as possible.

In order to provide community school directors with an opportunity to consult with each other the CBES has set up a directors' forum on e-mail. This service seems to be proving a success allowing past and present directors to share their concerns, experiences, tips and news.

Following the National Spiritual Assembly's decision to expand the remit of this Committee there are now several new and vital elements to our work. One of these is "spiritual parenting" and we are currently consulting on how best to address this issue. The CBES is not a body of experts and has no such claims. It is a service with UK-wide responsibilities, appointed by our National Spiritual Assembly. It commissions experts, as well as experienced friends in the field of education, to produce materials and training as necessary.

The Service now has two new members, the full team is: Shiva Shirinzadeh-Finch (Chair), Mitali Peckham (Secretary), Tel: 01223 573873, Karen O'Donoghue (Treasurer), Clare Whitehead and Homa Saadat.



Ideas from overseas - in Chile, students in the Faizi Bahá'í School work in the school's studio on a project called "Immerse yourselves in the Ocean of My Words", which is designed to improve oral and written expression. Bahá'í International News Service

## Year of Service Desk

YOSDesk - Sylvia Miley, 97 Waterloo Road, Southport PR8 4QN. Tel/fax: 01704 551514. Esmyr Koomen, Tel: 01865 407887 e-mail: [mailto:yosdesk@koomen.demon.co.uk](mailto:mailto:yosdesk@koomen.demon.co.uk) <http://www.bahai.org.uk/yos>

## Year of Service at Maxwell International Bahá'í School

Maxwell School is an institute of the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, located at beautiful Shawnigan Lake, near Victoria on Vancouver Island. It has 200 students from about 38 countries with very active dance and drama departments.

Maxwell Community Service Institute is an arm of Maxwell School which coordinates student volunteers with service opportunities in nearby communities. Most are performing dances/dramas at schools but other teams do stream keeping, nature trail building, work with children, youth, elders and First Nations peoples. One tribe is trying to save their language from extinction by recording the last two fluent speakers.

Year of Service volunteers have friendly housing, food, medical, shared transport, a tiny monthly stipend and a variety of work from mopping floors and cleaning toilets to language tutors, computer technician,

drama/dance/theatre support, library and academic assistants. Kitchen staff and bus drivers tend to be older volunteers. Most volunteers are less than 25 years old, but several retired folk make a huge difference. There are fantastic Holy Day celebrations to participate in, as well as choir, jazz band and other performing arts.

Maxwell International Bahá'í School, Vancouver Island, Canada email: <mailto:marian@maxwell.bc.ca>  
Talk to YOSDesk (UK).



**Team building and muscle building - a service project at Maxwell International Bahá'í School**

## **Live-in YOS opportunity in Northern Ireland Bahá'í Office**

An opportunity exists for a Year of Service person in the Bahá'í Office in Northern Ireland. The Office is situated a few miles outside central Belfast in a detached house in its own grounds. There is a bus service a short walk away. A large bedsit in the house with a bathroom and kitchen will be rent free, a small living allowance is available if required.

Age is unimportant but the applicant would need to be comfortable with living on their own in a large flat. They would need to have basic office skills and know how to use a computer. As the office only requires manning a few hours a day, it should be possible for them to get a part time job, or join the fellowship of the local active communities.

A minimum 6-month term of office would be ideal but the Bahá'í Council would consider a shorter period from the right candidate. English speaking is required as telephone work will be a large part of the job. All replies to: Mrs Viny Robinson, Secretary, Bahá'í Council for Northern Ireland, Tel: 028 703 58435 e-mail: <mailto:viny@onetel.net.uk>

## **DECLARE INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTIONS**

"The Wayfarer's Journey" CD £9 + 50p p&p. Narration of the Seven Valleys with musical interludes performed by Bahá'ís in the Cheddar Caves. Tel: 01749 880742 or buy it at National Conference

## **Women's Residential Weekend Ordinary Women - Extraordinary Lives!**

Maerdy cottages, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, South Wales November 3rd - 5th November 2000 (Fri - Sun)  
Registrar: Jan Fussell, Tel: 01554 776013 Details: Tracey Jones, Tel: 01554 741815

Only 14 places so book early. Luxury accommodation in the heart of the Welsh countryside, with outside catering for evening meals. New ideas from Acuto - ideas on how to run evening classes for women locally, develop communication skills and more... Total cost - £60. Just bring yourselves and a toothbrush!

## **Committee for International Pioneering and Travel Teaching CIPTT**

Thelma Batchelor, Tel: 01372 375782, e-mail: <mailto:batchelor@clara.net> Barbara Winner, Tel: 01162 730181, e-mail: <mailto:winners@zetnet.co.uk>

**From the National Spiritual Assembly of Austria -**

### **Travel teaching and pioneering in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

As you might know, the expansion of the Faith in Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina falls under the responsibility of our National Spiritual Assembly.

In a letter dated 4th June 2000 to our National Spiritual Assembly, the Universal House of Justice underlined the "critical importance" of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It continues to say that "every indication leads one to expect that this is a time when people of that sorely tried country will show extraordinary receptivity to the message of Bahá'u'lláh."

Many European countries have accepted refugees during the war and some are still living abroad where they have met the Faith. It is these Bahá'ís of Bosnian origin that we would like you to identify and personally encourage to come to Bosnia and Herzegovina and teach the Faith. Not only their knowledge of the language and the culture would enable them to be more efficient, but this could be their unique contribution to the spiritual construction of their home-country.

### **Yerrinbool Bahá'í Centre for Learning - Australia**

Anyone who wants to learn more about the Bahá'í Faith full-time is welcome to apply for the Youth Year of Study and Service, hosted by Yerrinbool Bahá'í School.

The course is - "Certificate Programme in Community Development". The study year runs from Feb to Nov 2001, and enrolments are open to mature students as well as youth. The curriculum includes Arts (dance, music and drama) as well as scholarship, service, individual study and group projects. The cost - US\$7,000 (can be paid monthly), - covers accommodation, meals, study materials and tuition, and service placement travel costs in Australia.

Apply as soon as possible via Web site: <http://www.bahai.org.au/yerrinbool>  
32 Gasnier Road, Barrack Heights, NSW, 2528, Australia Tel: 61-2-42970215, Fax: 61-2-42970296, e-mail Course Administrator, Shohreh Tala'i: <mailto:shohreht@bahai.org.au>

Should you be able to encourage applications for any of these positions, I would be pleased if you could advise candidates to write directly to the Mount Carmel Projects Office by way of Fax to 972 (4) 831 3330 or e-mail [carmel@bwc.org](mailto:carmel@bwc.org) All enquiries will be treated with the utmost urgency.

Please accept my grateful thanks for your continuous support of these Projects and your kind attention to this request that may succeed in filling these critical positions.

With loving Bahá'í greetings F Sahba Project Manager

**PHOTOS: Above: A decorative lamp along the way to the Centre for the Study of the Texts on the Arc of Mount Carmel. Below: This beautiful sculptured eagle graces the first of the terraces leading to the Shrine of the Báb.**