
 *
 * LETTER ONE  NAME ??????
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 * April, 1975 (We would like one !
 * Any suggestions ?)
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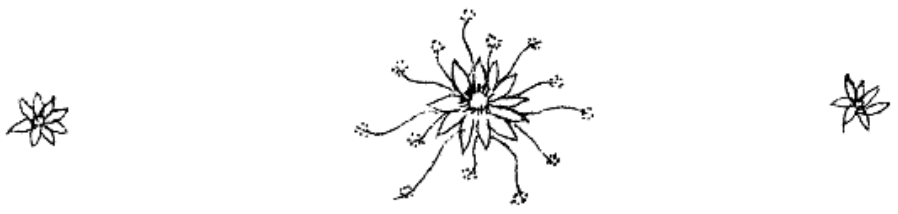


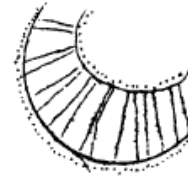
We are a group of people brought together by our belief in Veganism, to explore, seek and invite views and dispositions upon and towards life.

People at the initial meeting and by letter were concerned about communication, consumerism, compassion and conservation. There is at present much diversity of opinion as to what could or should be the outcome of gathering together to produce a newsletter. Some would be happy communicating with people through the newsletter, others hope that it might establish areas of need, and possibly diminish them. Whereas some regard Veganism as a means to an end, or as a method of removing some of the impositions of life; others regard it as a way of life itself - perhaps a creed to be sought and steadfastly implemented.

One area of intense interest is life sustenance - especially food. Food in fact is an inescapable part of Veganism, and to many an all consuming topic - with some justification since disregard for the environment, for human and other animal life, is implicit in present eating customs. Here there is consensus of opinion.

- o A group devoted so - to what ?
 - o o A group elated so - by what ?
 - o Our substance lies in paper files !
 - o Self sufficient in our company ?
- Talk is our asset !
 Yet seek another facet ?





Veganism in its place - a personal view

Veganism is essentially a reaction to certain negative aspects of society, and there would be no more need for a Vegan Society in a vegan world than there is need for a Society of Non-Cannibals at present. But Veganism doesn't provide the complete answer to all that is negative in ourselves and society and is but one component part of the complete reaction that is needed. It must be remembered that I am here considering only the negative aspects of ourselves and society and I am not denying the goodness and beauty that exist in the world and which should be affirmed.

The Vegan Society performs invaluable functions, especially in disseminating information, and I would not wish to belittle the efforts of those individuals who give such great service: it is having the 'proper' attitude to Veganism that I consider so important, and how much time and effort one gives to the Society can be a personal decision dependent on valid but differing individual characteristics.

To work wholeheartedly for veganism, or any other worthwhile cause, is one thing, but to crusade for veganism as if veganism were the answer to all the world's problems and as if vegans were particularly enlightened generally, compared with the rest of the human race is something else. By some quirk of fate, vegans have recognised the validity of the vegan ethic, but how many other great 'Truths' have many of us not recognised? Many non vegans have literally and selflessly given their lives for their fellow men. Most of us, as vegans, are living materially comfortable lives on a planet where half the human population starves and millions more suffer unspeakable agonies by man's insane violence. How much do we care? What would we be prepared to die for?

The distant suffering in other parts of the world (and even here in Britain) may seem beyond our responsibility, yet I believe that imbedded in the structures of our British Society and, ultimately, embedded in our individual personalities, are those factors which cause the horrors of the world. In so much as we support and perpetuate our society as it is (through our work, relationships, possessions, etc.) and in so much as our society helps as a nation to perpetuate, on an international scale, the present divided state of the world, we are responsible for the horrors of this world. To be normal citizens (except for being vegans!) - to respect the laws and institutions of this immoral society for the sake of our mental and physical security and comfort - is to be accomplices in the perpetration of the horrors of the world.

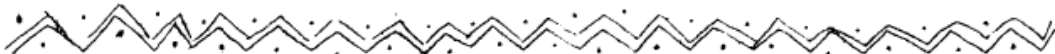
Our first responsibility is not to animals, not even to fellow humans, but to ourselves. The revolution in attitudes that the world needs must begin in ourselves. As R.D. Laing writes: "We are bemused and crazed creatures, strangers to our true selves, to one another, and to the spiritual and material world - mad, even from an ideal standpoint we can glimpse but not adopt". We should seek first to understand and discover ourselves and to do this we must realise that we are conditioned creatures, conditioned by the customs, traditions, habits, roles, rules, taboos, etc. of this society, and we must negate these things when they are not in accord with what we know, feel and can ascertain for ourselves. Ultimately we can only 'know' anything for ourselves and not by following blindly the dictates of others.



'To be nobody-but-myself - in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else - means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight, and never stop fighting' says E.E. Cummings. Only by understanding ourselves and being ourselves can we love ourselves; and, as is well known, if we don't love ourselves we can't love others. I would suggest that vegans tried not to label and identify themselves specifically as 'vegans'. To see ourselves as peculiarly different from the rest of the human race, purely because our diet, etc, is different (important as this is), and to emphasize this difference by the conspicuous use of an appropriate label (ie 'vegan') can only be a divisive strategy, as are the use of so many other labels by which people see the status, class and economic-value rankings of themselves and others in this divisive society. First and foremost, we are humans - not vegans. I would further suggest that as individuals we are most likely to influence other people, with respect to veganism, not by self-righteously trying to ram it down their throats, but by gaining their affection and respect for our whole selves as persons. If we're not likeable people we can hardly expect non-vegans to take our vegan attitudes seriously. We can only be likeable people through understanding ourselves and opening ourselves and our weaknesses up to others. The more open 'vegan' meetings are to outsiders, and the more that outsiders can get to know vegans as a group, then (if vegans generally are worth knowing!) the more likely that outsiders will take veganism seriously.

But I would finally suggest, on the same note as I began, that 'veganism' is not a suitable banner under which to attack the whole world 'problem'. Perhaps individuals, who might happen to be vegan but were also committed to the necessary revolution in themselves and in their relationships to others might group together to form an alternative society (or community, or group) which attempted to discover a better way of living which encompassed not only veganism but much, much more.

James Okell



We would like you to write to us about a wide variety of subjects in accordance with a more harmonious way of living.

Some examples:

Alternative Medicine, Spiritual Healing, Pacifism,
Fruitarianism/Raw Food, Communes (we would like to
get some vegan communes together!), Religion/Ethics,
Alternative Technology, Food Co-ops, Ecology,
Vegan Action/Activities, Gardening...
...and lots more!



ORGANICALLY GROWN

We hear a lot, and see a lot of "organically grown" food. This is obviously preferable to chemically grown and sprayed non-food. But this term "organic" includes the use of blood, bone-meal and slaughter-house offal. Is there any system by which veganically grown food may be distinguished? If not would growers marketing their produce make this clear?



HERBS

When I buy herbs I am usually offered herbs grown in other countries - and understandably costly. There is obviously an opening here for herb growers, wild herb gatherers. I've been told that "people in England can't be bothered to gather herbs". Yet there are herbs growing all over the countryside. When I was a child during the war, I was taken out gathering hips and haws



FOOD IN SEASON

If all food were bought and eaten only in season, we would be healthier more content, have more fun (its so nice looking forward to apples and pears in the autumn instead of eating them almost mechanically all the year round) - and we'd be spending less money. Last week I was offered in a wholefood shop, tomatoes, baby marrows and broad beans from Cyprus - at 50p a lb! What is in season in the Mediterranean is not in Britain.



INDIGENOUS FOOD

I feel strongly (and, incidentally, am supported by certain macrobiotic teachers) that one should eat only food which is indigenous to one's own place of origin - other animals tend to suffer ill health and even death if fed "foreign" food (e.g. pandas) Speaking of other animals -



NATURAL LIVING PATTERNS

Other animals fit their living patterns to natural cycles - diurnal creatures, of which man is one, rise with the sun, and retire with the sun. What makes us think we can step out of line, and stay out, and get away with it? Main objection to this revolutionary notion is that the winter day would be so short - but then winter is the time for resting, renewal - in preparation for the long, busy days of summer. Meanwhile, for the ills that afflict perverse Homo-"Sapiens" -

MEDICINE

I have tried to obtain information from the National Institute of Herbalists about the incidence of vegans among their practitioners, but had no luck - any information on this would be gratefully received.

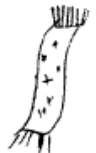


HIDDEN EVILS

As a vegan, I avoid the use of articles, food, materials derived from slaughter or exploitation of animals - wool, leather, bone, ivory, skin, furfine. But two points worry me. First, so often I run up against ignorance, my own and others - I don't know what things are made of! I heard recently that photographic film is made from animal products.....

Secondly - the alternatives available in for example footwear, clothing seem to be largely plastics - which are not only unhealthy and uncomfortable and aesthetically unpleasing - but also polluting - and pollution entails the destruction of the environment - including plants, other animals (not to mention ourselves) And what about batteries, petrol, paraffin, candles, electricity

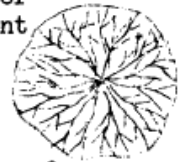
Avoiding such materials - animal derived and polluting - entails the loss of many otherwise enjoyable objects and activities for which it is important to find alternative materials and methods of production. Any ideas on musical instruments for example that do not include gut skin, ivory? Alternatives to existing alternatives are needed now!





TREES

the use of wood, though aesthetically and ethically preferable to many other materials in many ways, entails the destruction of trees - which are more useful, for a start, if they are left in the ground. So should we not be exploring possibilities of expanding the use of stone, for example and other minerals - stone in building, flint instead of matches. What else?



FURTHER ON "FOREIGN PLANTS"

Cotton is getting very expensive. At one time, linen was used exclusively in this country for making articles which are now made of cotton - hence the term, still in use - "bed-linen" - "linen" meaning household drapery, cloths, sheets, underclothes. There seems to be a need here to renew the cultivation of flax. Is this possible, or has the climate changed or what? (I heard that during the first World War, the Germans developed yarn from the common stinging nettle - and found it very satisfactory). How about that then?

Ann Shepherd

VIEW TO ACTION

With many scientists, publications, church and environmental groups at long last putting forward the view that valuable foodstuffs are being lost through the practice of feeding grains to livestock and recommending changes in the average diet to include more primary foods, I feel that the time is ripe for as many vegans as possible to make their presence felt within their local communities to show that a society is already in existence which can offer advice and proof that a diet free from animal produce is quite feasible.

Although I realise that many vegans are of the opinion that the best way of spreading knowledge of thier beliefs is by allowing anyone with whom contact is made to see that a normal life can be led with the minimum of fuss, I believe that it is our duty to present the facts about veganism to as wide a range of the public as possible to allow individuals to be aware of alternatives to their normal way of life. In doing so it is totally unnecessary to act in a forceful manner but it is better to confine any efforts to a presentation of facts in an unemotional and non-righteous manner with the emphasis being on allowing the person in question to make up their own mind

Possibilities for action could be an occasional stall in a market with literature and examples of food, a mini street survey to ascertain peoples knowledge of veganism, leafleting, joining groups such as War on Want and Oxfam and quietly putting over ones views, and finally correspondence in local papers.

Any further ideas would be much appreciated and if anyone is interested in making a start on such a scheme perhaps they would let me know and a meeting can be arranged in the near future.

Keith Bryan
698 Lordship Lane
London N.22



A NEW FORM OF SOCIETY

Veganism directs one's attention towards basic foods as opposed to the incorrect feeding patterns of modern society. For this reason vegans are drawn away from the sophistication of urban living towards a closer link with the country and agriculture. Many of us feel we want to get away from the stress of the rat race of conformity and to find our true selves in a struggle for self-sufficiency. But self-sufficiency is unlikely to prove a Garden of Eden. It is more likely, at least temporarily, to be a cold, dark and hungry existence, a hard school of experience and above all lonely. Veganism should provide an answer to the problems facing present day man without necessarily going back to a grim struggle with nature.

On the other hand, we have the ridiculous workings of the modern economy where apples are dear because they are transported from distant places, when in fact we could grow them for free in our gardens with less trouble than that which we lavish on roses and house plants. Again many neglect the upkeep of the house they live in because it is not their property. The last few years have proved that modern society is aimed in the wrong direction with wars, inflation, violent strikes, petrol crises, cars destroying our cities and so on. The answer can only lie in a form of society where the individual will find happiness and pride in supplying most of his basic needs and in recognising his duties as well as his rights.

As I see it, each family should acquire the necessary knowledge, devote enough labour and skill to provide at least a part of its basic needs for food, housing, fuel and clothing. There should be a basis of self-sufficiency but not necessarily doing it all one's self. We could live in small communities where sick and aged would be taken care of by their neighbours (not an impersonal State). The community would be aiming to live in accordance with standards of ecology and beauty rather than measuring all effort in terms of cash. Solar energy, wind and water power would be used to provide amenities. Simple scientific studies would surely evolve a life style suitable for contemporary man rather than some heroic Robinson Crusoe.

This form of society would need truly democratic citizens, conducting their lives, not by the ever increasingly complex regulations of the present State, but genuinely observing the central law of respect for one's neighbour and all creation and doing what they feel to be right as against the selfish ideal of doing what one can get away with. We need a change of heart in the individual and also an environment which will foster this new attitude of mind.

Harry Mather

VEGAN SOCIETY LOCAL CONTACTS

Hopefully, all of you who have written to me asking to be put in touch with other members have not been disappointed. Usually members are not totally isolated geographically, and it is possible to find contacts for them within a reasonable distance.



Unfortunately, the system is relatively new and somewhat imperfect, so I cannot always put people in touch with members of similar age, interests, etc, as for the most part I only have a list of names and addresses to consult. Nevertheless, if you feel like letting me have information about yourself which I can pass on, I should very much appreciate this.

Two specific requests: firstly Brian Hart of 30 Compton Avenue, Brighton BN1 3PN, is interested in forming a local group in his area. Would any people along the Sussex coast like to get in touch with him and lend support?

Secondly I have been asked to pass on information relating to the Family Commune, Waun-Wyd, Cynwyl Elfed, Carmarthenshire, Wales. This is a group of vegans, left-wing pacifists, non-smokers and non-drug-takers who are trying to live a life close to nature, growing their own food and hoping to produce their own electricity. At present there are 7 members, with ages ranging from 12 to 42. They would particularly like to establish links with other vegans in Wales, and have a caravan in which they can accomodate visitors if a few days notice is given. Please write if you are at all interested.

Finally, please write to me if you wish to be put in touch with other vegans and if you have written before, and have not received a satisfactory reply, please write again! For contacts requests, I should be grateful for at least 2 stamped but not addressed envelopes.

Please note my new address:



Cherry Tree Cottage
West Road
Bridport Dorset



Hugo Stearn

CONTACTS EVENTS IDEAS DATES



THE SECOND ENVIRO FAIR: A People's Free Festival

An outdoor event on the campus of Sussex University, Falmer, Brighton. From noon Sat 14 June 75 until the afternoon of Sun 15th. Organized by the Sussex Whole Earth Group and UoS Link Up.

.....Something like a combination of an environmental projects exhibition including alternative technology, village fete, organic produce & herbs, homemade fare, children's carnival and free festival, musicians, poets, street theatre, inflatables, dancers, clowns, etc; Talk-ins (Sunday) - land access, New Villages Association, Community Land Trust, Digger Party, improvement of urban environment.

Each visiting group should bring own exhibition or stall - be simple, imaginative and bold. All exhibitors require own self-contained power supply and tools and equipment; exhibits should be ready for assembly on Saturday morning. Sleeping-bag space for distant visitors available from Friday night.



This event seems a great opportunity to get a vegan stand together (food as well as literature). We already have a few who are keen to go but would welcome further offers of help so please contact us as soon as possible if you're interested.



CAMBRIDGE FOLK FESTIVAL: July 25/26/27

Anyone interested in going to this? Malcolm, David, Marijke & Kevin would like to go. Maybe it would be possible to serve/sell vegan meals on the festival site - and this is an idea relevant perhaps to any festival/event/meeting in the country.

Your adverts/classifieds/messages etc. are welcome for this column - no charge!



This newsletter was produced April 27/28 at 8 Petherton Road, London where Marijke & Kevin McCartney, John Hopkins and Ann & Robin Shepherd live. Also helping were David Barrett, John Bland, Malcolm Horne, Susan Besford, Myra Kelly, James Okell, Keith Bryan and Andrew Kozlowski.

The next meeting to produce the second newsletter will be at the same place Sat June 7th and Sun June 8th. Come and help put it together (bring a sleeping bag if you want to stay overnight); we want this to be a co-operative effort full of everyone's ideas and thoughts.

If you can't come, send us your articles, letters, comments, suggestions. Or just send us an s.a.c. for us to forward you the next newsletter. We want to create communication channels so please do write!

All communications please to Marijke & Kevin McCartney at 8 Petherton Road, London N5 7RD.

Love and peace

PLANTMILK

Arthur Ling of Plantmilk Ltd. has written to us asking for publicity regarding the campaign to reduce the economic burden imposed on people choosing to use alternatives to animal products. We thought the most effective move would be to reproduce a letter which could be cut out, signed and sent to the appropriate Government department.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food,
(Food and Drink Industries Division)
Whitehall Place,
London SW1A 2HH

Dear Sirs,

I would like to support the case of those people who for ethical or medical reasons do not use animal products. At the moment these people are penalised by the present subsidies system. The taxpayer is in effect having to pay for the dairy products whether or not he is consuming it. It would seem fairer if substitutes to animal products e.g. plant milk made from soya protein are also given some form of subsidy. This could take several forms:

1) CASH TOKENS

The award of cash tokens to those signing a declaration of abstinence from dairy produce.

2) RATE RELIEF

Factory farms are de-rated but factories producing plant substitutes to milk are having to pay increasing rates.

3) IMPORT DUTY

Duty on raw materials like soya protein and sunflower oil could be decreased.

4) V.A.T.

V.A.T. should be removed from food materials such as soya protein. Such taxes freeze the working capital of companies producing alternatives to animal products.

Yours faithfully,