

10. *Major Prizes Needed:*— Our initiative to have peace with the environment recognized as a theme for the Nobel Peace Prize was continued under the latest deadline for nominations, and there have been further unofficial talks about the desirability of a separate prize for ecology and/or conservation. Fortunately some other major awards are available to help relieve the

current very serious shortage of funds for environmental work, and we hope soon to be in a position at last to seek actively the necessary wherewithal for the Biosphere Prizes mentioned in 6 (above).

NICHOLAS POLUNIN

4 June 1995 (updated on 15 October)

## Biosphere Day 1995

(Celebrated each Year on September 21st\*)

There are a few things that I feel should be said by way of explanation and exhortation on this Fifth celebration of Biosphere Day. The first is that humanity's perception of its surroundings has long benefited — especially in North America — from the holding of an *Earth Day*, falling in the Spring, and possessed I understand of a large budget to awaken people widely to some of the problems that our only known life-supporting Planet Earth faces. We have also had for some years the summer *Environment Day* — usually on June 5th — which is the occasion of the bestowal of its most prestigious awards by the United Nations Environment Programme. And now — well spaced into the presaging of the Autumn Solstice in the Northern Hemisphere and of course the Spring Solstice in the Southern Hemisphere — we have *Biosphere Day*, which is designed to remind all humanity, annually on this date, of its quintessential imperative that surely is to safeguard The Biosphere above all else. For The Biosphere is the relatively fragile — some say doomed — life-supporting sphere around the rest of our far-more-solid Planet Earth, and is our own and all Nature's sole home and entire life-support apart from energy from the Sun.

Without The Biosphere we and our descendents cannot hope to exist, so clearly it is this Biosphere which we should take care of as our foremost responsibility. Moreover, to quote from an editorial in *Environmental Conservation* 'we humans have the unique responsibility, ultimately to the entire Universe, of safeguarding life; for it now seems that there is nowhere else that life exists in, and emanates from, than Earth's Biosphere, which it is still

\* Message sent to supporters on all inhabited continents, adjuring them to celebrate Biosphere Day in however modest a way.

surely in our own but no other living thing's power to safeguard and preserve.'

We believe, too, that Humankind now has, in ever-extending plenty, the scientific knowledge and means of saving its world. But at present the public recognition and the will and full resolve are lacking, people with rare exceptions being interested only in their own environments, though realization of the need to think and act globally is beginning to spread. That is what Biosphere Day is striving to further, helped in due course we hope by a supporting Fund and aspired-for Biosphere Prizes. These intended awards are to be for demonstrated *ad hoc* leadership, and we hope that at least one will be substantial enough each year to enable recipients to continue pertinently valuable work, while other, satellite ones should be for advances in component topics and provide real encouragement to recipients to continue their chosen work of ultimate benefit to The Biosphere. There are also starting in several countries supportive Biosphere Clubs — autonomous but under the auspices of our Foundation, and ultimately we hope forming a global network in the manner of Lions and Rotary Clubs.

So have a happy and ecologically beneficial Biosphere Day, spread our gospel as effectively and widely as you can, and let us all keep in touch<sup>†</sup> with developments and help to guide them in the best direction for The Biosphere's benefit.

NICHOLAS POLUNIN

7 September 1995

<sup>†</sup> Destined to be far easier from this end as of early next year when I will have relinquished the rather exacting and certainly time-consuming sole editorship of my last international Journal, *Environmental Conservation*. — N.P.

## Survey of Global Environmental Issues Conducted by the Asahi Glass Foundation

The Asahi Glass Foundation has conducted a survey by means of a questionnaire on global environmental issues every year since the 'Earth Summit' was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Although international interest in, and enthusiasm for, environmental issues may seem to have waned since then, we do believe that substantial and steady progress in protecting the environment has been made in many countries.

This year, 2,656 questionnaires were mailed in April to specialists world-wide in both governmental and nongovernmental organizations that are listed in our environmental database, and 576 were returned by the end of July — a response-rate of 22%.

The following are the key findings of the 1995 survey:

**1. Humanity in Crisis — Today and 50 Years into the Future:**— Although the average level of concern for all respondents in 1995 was virtually unchanged from that of

1994, large changes within regions could be detected. In particular, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and Oceania showed a heightened sense of crisis. On the other hand, the sense of crisis in Western Europe and the United States and Canada diminished.

In general, respondents felt that the state of the global environment in 50 years would be worse than conditions today. However, responses from developing regions were optimistic.

**2. Lifestyle Changes:**— Respondents from regions such as the United States and Canada, Latin America, and Western Europe; showed a strong recognition of the need to adapt to a more frugal lifestyle.

**3. Progress on Environmental Issues since the 'Earth Summit':**— This year, the accomplishments of NGOs, local governments, and citizens' groups, were again valued

highly. However, measures to combat desertification and contend with overpopulation and other basic problems are perceived as inadequate. There has also been little progress made in changing economic systems to effect greater environmental conservation, or in establishing the necessary capital-creating mechanisms for the preservation of the environment.

Large differences can be seen between respondents from developing and developed countries regarding what is most important for solving environmental problems. The former focused on overpopulation, agriculture, and education, while the latter focused on changes in lifestyles and economic systems.

**4. Perceptions of Global Warming and Effective Countermeasures:**— The problem of global warming was regarded most seriously by Oceania, which includes many island nations, and least seriously by Japan.

The measure that was judged to be the most effective in dealing with global warming was the development and promotion of recyclable energy resources. Among respondents from developed countries, support for systematic measures such as the introduction of environmental taxes was strong.

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### The Linear City

The idea of the Linear City results from ten years of study following which a close look will make you realize that it could offer several solutions to the ecological and sociological problems of our times of ever-increasing population-pressures. Moreover, the Linear City aims at increasing the quality of life by bringing the countryside to the City and does so through a realistic and affordable transition. The world is currently faced with the fact that thousands of millions of people need a place to live on a limited planet governed by ecological laws. On the one hand, cities offer the concentration needed for work, services, and the leisure that makes them appealing but, on the other hand, the suburbs and the countryside offer the tranquility and the beauty of Nature that is just as needed by most. The following architectural probing is aimed at finding a solution that would blend the two lifestyles by making cities with versatile public transportation more efficient than personal cars that currently are a major source of noise and pollution.

#### Origins and Solutions

This way cities are built goes back to the beginning of civilization, and even though they evolved to some extent to adapt themselves to new needs, the principle stayed the same: to provide means of transportation and a network to link different locations (home, workplaces, services, etc.). This has led to huge, noisy and polluted cities that are often not at all aesthetic. They became surrounded by suburbs because people were looking for a lifestyle that a city could no longer offer. Suburbs have spread over large areas and become farther and farther away from the city where people commute every day. This requires miles and miles of highways and roads, and they are still expanding.

It is not possible to house numerous millions of people in this way without running into serious ecological problems. However, it is technologically feasible to reduce considerably the inhabited area, to improve the quality of life, and to be ecologically correct, while also reducing considerably the cost of living.

Cities offer the concentration needed for work, services, and leisure that makes them appealing; but on the other hand, the suburbs and the countryside offer the tranquility and the beauty of Nature that is just as needed by most people. As already indicated, our architectural research aimed at finding a solution that would blend the two lifestyles by making cities with a versatile public transportation more efficient than personal cars which are a source of noise and pollution.

This solution is the Linear City built in height and linearly. Architectural variations are added to modules set up at half-landings. Three transportation systems are inserted in three underground levels: they are superposed one on the other and connected. By being linear, this network is simpler and more efficient than current arrangements, and at the same time the city is located next to the countryside (see Fig. 1).

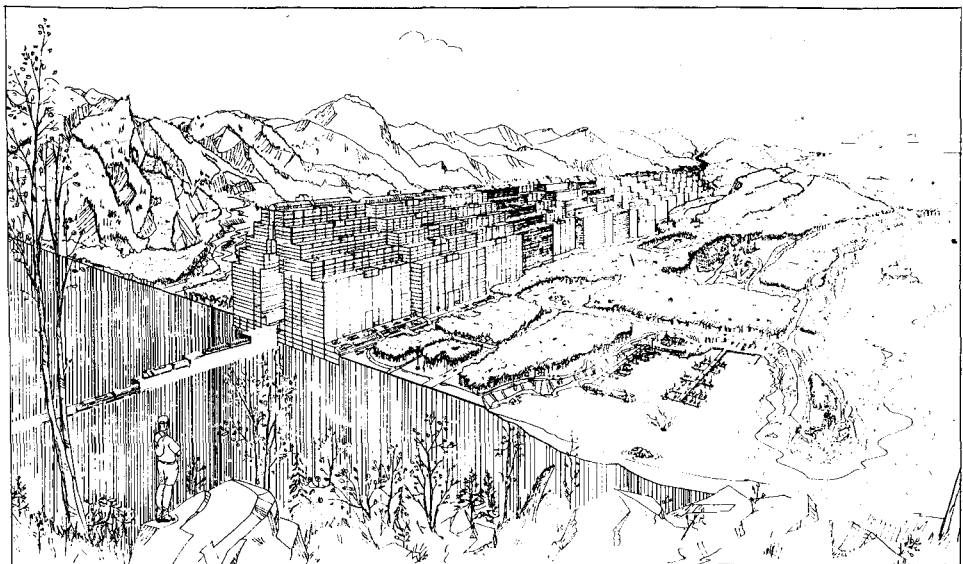


FIG. 1. Linear city in a country setting.