



# Bahá'í Journal UK

Journal of the Bahá'í Community of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

May 2001 / 158BE

BASED-UK

## BASED-UK

(the views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect those of BASED-UK)

## Perspectives on Social Transformation

by Zarrín T. Caldwell

### Contents Page

#### Regular Features

- Bahá'í World Centre
- National Assembly
- Regional Councils
- BOREA
- International Travel
- Teaching & Pioneering
- Travel Teaching and Homefront Pioneering and Advice for travellers
- Youth Space
- International News
- Letters
- UK Community News

#### Highlights

- Social Transformation
- Island Hopping
- Beyond Words
- UK Community History
- How I became a Bahá'í

- Archives Index

Being a new arrival to the United Kingdom (from the United States), a couple of things have struck me. Well, more than a couple, but let's start with two. Firstly, it seems difficult to teach the Faith here if one approaches the topic from a strictly "religious" point of view. Reception seems improved, however, if people are introduced to the Faith via its focus on acts of service. Secondly, even though the U.K. is an industrialized region, there are still many social and economic development problems to be addressed here. Hence, at least in my mind, social and economic development becomes a very important element of advancing the standing of the Cause in the UK through service to the community.

There are many ways of implementing social and economic development projects in practice. A large, self-supporting project is not necessarily required. Individual acts of charity can be considered social and economic development. But, there is also strength in numbers. Bahá'ís in any given area can gather together, consult about their skills, and think about how these skills can address needs facing the community. Certainly, Bahá'ís can also work with other like-minded organizations and, ideally, bring Bahá'í principles of consultation and unity to the process.

We are also likely to have perspectives on community problems that may be quite different. For example, one of the biggest social problems in Britain seems to be teenage pregnancy. As Bahá'ís, we would probably put this problem in the larger context. In other words, what spiritual dimensions are not being addressed that, if they were, would lead to longer term and more sustainable social change? Communities might ask, as guided by the Bahá'í Writings, "How can we promote the advancement of women and help (both men and women) to change attitudes about gender roles and responsibilities?" Potential projects related to these ideas might be to sponsor gender equity workshops, or to develop programs which work with young girls in the community to cultivate their confidence and self-esteem.\* I call this particular approach "Beyond Birth Control," and, in this case, it's a perspective that Bahá'ís are well-placed to bring to the problem at hand.

Teenage pregnancy is only one example though. This "bigger picture" process of questioning can be applied to a variety of social problems in the U.K. Regrettably, we live

in a culture (both regionally and globally) that tends to focus solely on material solutions. But, we know that the "missing link" is often the spiritual element. Thus, Bahá'í projects of social and economic development have the potential to be more successful and effective if their design is based (one hopes) on the recognition of the spiritual dimension of human nature. Such projects would also make (one hopes) the ethical, emotional and intellectual development of the individual a central priority, rather than treating these aspects as peripheral to material and educational development, narrowly defined. And, ultimately, this is what makes the Bahá'í approach so different.

The Bahá'í International Community emphasises the above points in their statement on sustainable communities. They add, "Bahá'u'lláh's statement that all people are *born to carry forward an ever-advancing civilisation* implies that every person has both the right and the responsibility to contribute to this historic and far-reaching, collective enterprise whose goal is nothing less than the peace, prosperity and unity of the entire human family."

Witney, Oxfordshire

\* For those interested in this topic, see my article at:

<http://www.geocities.com/mdlouie98/> under "Z's Page."

**Liverpool Conference 17/18 February**

Forty one delegates, representing 31 communities from around the UK, squeezed into the Bahá'í Centre for another stimulating week-end of Bahá'í social and economic development awareness raising.

Opening with a beautiful memorial service for Hassan Sabri who had devoted so many years of his life to encouraging the Bahá'ís to be engaged in acts of humanitarian service the conference ended with many of the participants returning home with renewed determination to do this.

We studied the Writings, heard of the triumphs and difficulties of four communities who have made a start, saw new audio visual presentations of the SAT rural education programme and the Tierra Santa Orphanage, talked, discussed and consulted.

We send our thanks and appreciation to the Bahá'ís of Liverpool for their warm hospitality, the delicious food they prepared and for all the help they gave us.

---

***New Fundraising Video for the Tierra Santa Orphanage***

This new professionally made 30 minute video of the Orphanage is available to borrow to assist with any fundraising activities. Please ask the secretary.

**BASED-UK**

Secretary: Susie Howard  
Fax: 01235 533278  
E-mail: [secretariat@baseduk.org](mailto:secretariat@baseduk.org)