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Editorial

This month I want to share with you some thoughts I've often had for quite some time on a subject I've never written about, but on which most of our readers have also had some thoughts from time to time, I'm sure!!

I am referring to the subject of Global-warming and the detrimental effect many of our human activities have on our general environment which, in turn, seems to adversely affect our global weather patterns, according to most environmental scientists.

Those of us who are old enough to remember our weather patterns back over the last sixty years know that there is certainly something unusual going on with our weather from time to time, especially over the last twenty years, compared to the forty years previous to this period. Probably the most alarming proof of this is the persistent melt back of our glaciers and large ice fields such as in Alaska, the far north of Canada, Greenland, and even more seriously, both polar regions! When a chunk of ice about 130km long by 30km wide at its' broadest point, breaks off the Antarctic ice shelf, I would not call it an iceberg anymore, it's an ice-island!!!

Mind you, it is so big and heavy that it is unlikely to drift far from the continent and will probably lose break-off chunks the size of 'normal' icebergs over the next ten years until the 'core' itself is small enough to break-up into a few large icebergs. It probably won't even have much effect on our weather, it was more likely a 'result' of our changing weather patterns, but if this is so, it is an alarming event! It seems that about 90% of the Worlds' meteorologists are in full agreement that it is mainly our human activities that are responsible for this alarming global warming!

And it appears almost certain now, the main reason for the serious damage to our 'ozone layers' is the almost explosive progress and expansion of mans' industry all through the 20th century. But agricultural changes too, have undoubtedly contributed their share to the imbalance of nature! Some time ago I read an article in the 'Limmattaler Zeitung', the local newspaper of the beautiful and fertile Limmat Valley between the cities of Zurich and Baden. This article was mainly from information supplied by the local Environmental Protection Society, which had been watching and studying the local environment for many years.

One of the more alarming things they had found was a continuous decline in birdlife over many years, particularly useful, insect-eating small birds which were always a boon to farmers' fruit trees. The Society concluded that the main reason for this one change in the environment was farming progress. On the one hand, farmers were forced to do more and more winter and spring chemical spraying on fruit trees to obtain good quality consumer fruit, which in turn, forced them to start planting young, low-trunk trees in largely symmetrical form for ease of all control, from pruning, spraying, to fruit-picking. On the other hand, as these orchard blocks matured, farmers had no option but to gradually cut down their old and scattered trees which had now become a burden rather than an asset!

I well remember as a boy, the huge Theilersbirnbaum (Theilers pear trees), which grew to 30+ metres high! The loss of most of these trees alone in a district would have had a very detrimental effect on small-bird life in the surrounding area. Sadly both farmers and birds were caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, as the saying goes!!! Unfortunately, these new, low, fruit-trees did not give the birds anywhere near the protection the mighty old trees had done, hence another large detriment to bird life!

But there is no doubt that the major pollution comes from the main industrial countries of the World and as long as the likes of Australia, the USA and many others refuse to commit to the Kyoto Protocols to reduce their contaminating emissions, all we ordinary little citizens can do is our little bit by recycling as much as possible of our daily trash!!! Every little bit helps, as our Grandparents used to say!!!

One thing we can all be sure of though. Unless the people of all nations pressure their governments to work with others to drastically reduce the Worlds' 'greenhouse gas' emissions, it will not matter one iota whether you are a Christian or Jew, Muslim or Buddhist, or a Pagan from Timbuktu, our Descendants will all suffer the same miserable end with our dying Planet, when ----???, in 100 years, 200 maybe? Grim food for thought I know so we had better start doing our every little bit to help protect our environment, fast!!!!

Cheerio for this month, from Paul.

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