



A Single Global Economy In the context of today's events

ECONOMICS CONFERENCE
Report of the 2nd Annual Meeting

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This meeting was held at the Goetheanum, Dornach (Basel), Switzerland, 8-9 September 2003.

Within the Social Sciences Section of the School of Spiritual Science, a second meeting of the Economics Conference was held at the Goetheanum on 8/9 September 2003. This time there were upwards of 20 participants, mainly German-speaking. The meeting was therefore held in English and German, a necessity that put the accent on listening. Indeed, as last year, listening describes well the mood that prevailed throughout our time together.

Two main themes were woven together: What is the methodology of spiritual science in regard to economic matters? And, can we identify existing elements of a one-world economy, notwithstanding the continuing prevalence of the nation state and economic nationalism?

Ranging from methodology to taxation and from the realities of banana production in Latin America to the illusory nature of neo-liberalism, the topics for consideration were provided by various contributions from participants on subjects. The aim was not to overload the meeting with content, however, but to work with what the presenters had given us. In this way, the emphasis was on co-working and community building among colleagues.

The deliberations left one with a feeling that we need to strengthen our work together if we are to offer the world anything in the way of a concerted set of ideas and if these ideas are to be a match for today's prevailing orthodoxies. In a powerful role-play, one participant subjected Rudolf Steiner's idea of association to the kind of treatment it could expect from the Chicago School. This was a disconcerting experience that showed how we need to develop enlarged egoism - a love of the world economy as a whole - if we are to transcend the pervasive, narrow-minded egoism on which modern economic life is predicated.

We can help strengthen our thoughts in this respect if we can take hold of current-day phenomena such as the pension funds crisis or taxation techniques. If we can see that double-entry bookkeeping, for example, provides a direct means to link the need for a world currency (but without a world polity) with Steiner's indications about three kinds of money. Or if we can recognise the existence of a taxation being and learn to understand what it is asking of humanity today.

The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the purpose and future of the Economics Conference (renamed from 'faculty' in order better to evoke its role as a standing conference, rather than a department). A wide range of views were shared, such as the need to find a way to think thoughts for humanity, thoughts that are able to withstand public scrutiny and yet be worthy of Michael, or the need to find ways to meet together as colleagues in the School of Michael and thus to provide a counter-experience to the isolation that arises when one finds oneself surrounded only by materialist ideas.

A third meeting is being planned for 20/21 June 2004. A theme suggested in the recent Section meeting in Dornach (21-23 November 2003) was “What do we understand by ‘economics’?” It is also to be hoped that we can broaden the main languages to include French, thus helping give the work a more cosmopolitan culture. Any member of the School interested in attending should contact the Social Sciences Section secretariat at the Goetheanum.